INTRODUCTION

This paper explores Australian and New Zealand university policy websites and identifies best practice features deserving of attention through the awarding, today, of six Policy Oscars.

This paper is one output from a University Policy Benchmarking Project. This project was undertaken to:

- Examine the state of policy and policy development in Australasian universities as reflected through university websites;
- Identify good practice exemplars and features;
- Identify quality resources supporting the university policy development cycle; and
- Establish models for university policy management.

University policy development is a current and topical issue, and the research clearly revealed significant activity in this area amongst selected Australasian universities.

RESEARCH METHOD

The University Policy Benchmarking Project involved an examination of 16 Australian and New Zealand university policy websites over the period February to April, 2010.

SLIDE – UNIVERSITY POLICY BENCHMARKING PROJECT SAMPLE

The sample included:

- 13 universities spanning all Australian States and Territories (except Tasmania)¹;
- 3 universities from New Zealand (north and south island);
- Both ‘sandstone’ and ‘red-brick’ universities;
- Research-intensive universities, including five Group of Eight (Go8) universities;
- Single (higher education) and dual-sector (higher education / vocational education) universities;
- Metropolitan and regional universities; and
- One private university (Bond University).

SLIDE – LIST OF UNIVERSITIES

The actual list of universities sampled is:

- University of Queensland
- Charles Darwin University
- Bond University
- University of New South Wales
- University of Technology, Sydney
- Charles Sturt University

¹ The University of Tasmania was explicitly excluded for the purposes of the Liquid Learning Conference paper.
RESEARCH APPROACH

SLIDE – RESEARCH METHOD

Based on information available from university websites, the research involved:

- Comparative analysis of University Policy Frameworks and Policy on Policy statements;
- Comparative analysis of presentation methods and accessibility of University Policy Repositories and University Policy Websites (which in some cases are the same thing);
- An examination of resources available to support the university policy development cycle (for example, through Policy Toolkits);
- Comprehensive benchmarking of a ‘core sample’ of four university policies (Plagiarism Policy, Environmental Sustainability Policy, Leave Without Pay Policy and Credit Policy), spanning corporate and academic operations and traditional versus emerging university-sector focuses;
- The development of ‘model’ University Policy Frameworks and Policy on Policy statements;
- The development of skeleton University Policy Websites; and
- Identification of ‘good practice’ core sample policies.

LIMITATIONS AND SUBJECTIVITY

The research method involved consideration of policy documentation and information accessible through the 16 selected university’s websites. Limitations to this approach include the following:

- Sample size – the project targeted 12 of the 39 Australian universities\(^2\) and three of the eight New Zealand universities;
- Currency of University web-based information, given that online information may lag practice;
- The volume of information, which added complexity (and depth) to the project; and
- Accessibility of University web-based information, as a small number of Universities targeted restricted some policy documentation to internal users. However, in most cases considered, such information is held in the public domain.

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\(^2\) Universities not included in the sample were: Australian Catholic University, Central Queensland University, Curtin University of Technology, Deakin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Macquarie University, Monash University, Murdoch University, Queensland University of Technology, Southern Cross University, University of Ballarat, University of Canberra, University of Melbourne, University of New England, University of Newcastle, The University of Notre Dame Australia, University of South Australia, University of Southern Queensland, University of Sydney, University of Tasmania, University of the Sunshine Coast, University of Western Sydney and Victoria University (Australian universities) and Lincoln University, Massey University, University of Auckland, University of Canterbury and University of Waikato (New Zealand universities).
Overall, the research located a wealth of data from a comprehensive sample with significant variation and provided a solid basis for comparative analysis and identification of good practice models and resources.

**Policy Oscars** awarded reflect information about university policy and practice which is available in the public domain through university websites. It is anticipated that additional examples of good practice are in place both at the universities examined and other Australian and New Zealand universities outside the scope of this research.

**UNIVERSITY POLICY FRAMEWORKS**

**SLIDE – UNIVERSITY POLICY FRAMEWORKS**

The research involved the location and consideration of University Policy Frameworks, which may be articulated in a stand-alone document or reflected in a Policy on Policy statement. 11 of the 16 targeted Universities had stand-alone Policy on Policy documents or statements regarding their University Policy Framework\(^3\). For the purposes of this exercise, the terms University Policy Framework and Policy on Policy may be used interchangeably.

The research found a considerable degree of variation in this area. Some universities sought primarily to establish clarity and consistency in policy documentation presentation (supported by standard policy instrument templates), whereas others had broader objectives.

**SLIDE – TOWARDS A DEFINITION**

The University of Wollongong’s *Standard on UOW Policy* aims to:

“establish a defined, clear, identifiable, consistent and enforceable system for the development, approval, implementation and review of policies ... (and) provide a mechanism to ensure that policies are compliant with the strategic direction of the University and with relevant legislation”\(^4\).

A comprehensive University Policy Framework:

- defines university policy;
- establishes the range of policy instruments (e.g. Policy, Procedure, Guideline);
- specifies approval authorities for all policy instruments (e.g. Council, Vice-Chancellor, Senior Executive, local heads);
- identifies policy development cycle stages; and
- defines the application of policy instruments (i.e. university-wide and/or section-specific or local).

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2 University of Wollongong, *Standard on UOW Policy*, p.3.
These details are generally derived from provisions of university founding legislation (in Australia), delegations of authority arrangements and Policy on Policy provisions.

SLIDE – NEED FOR EFFECTIVE UNIVERSITY POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Universities themselves acknowledge the benefits of having an effective University Policy Framework. For example, the University of New South Wales clearly states that without an effective policy framework:

- “Policy can be accessed through multiple websites which is confusing to staff and does not ensure access to the “correct” version.
- There is no standard policy development process. Many policy documents are therefore unclear and inconsistent and many procedures are incorrectly labelled as policy.
- Compliance is more difficult to achieve due to a lack of consultation, or ineffective consultation when drafting policy.
- Approval paths are unclear and difficult to ascertain.
- Implementation is usually not considered during development and accordingly is often ineffective.
- Obsolete and out of date policy (is) not managed through a policy review cycle.”

Having an effective policy framework is, however, one of many ingredients for having effective policy.

SLIDE – WHAT IS POLICY?

The research found that universities variously describe policy as some combination of the following:

- Mandatory or non-discretionary ...
- Statements of intent or principle ...
- Guiding or establishing ...
- Conduct, practice, strategic direction, action, operations, obligations and/or decision-making.

The term ‘policy’ is used to refer to:

- all levels of text in a University Policy Framework, including that specifically termed ‘policy’;
- decisions taken by committees which are only recorded in minutes;
- in Human Resources and Finance sections in particular, Operating Manual Chapters written as work instructions or process documents;
- in relation to teaching and research academic policy, high-level governance instruments such as Statutes, Rules or Regulations, with supporting Procedures, Guidelines and Checklists.

The term ‘policy’ is also used to refer to practice, strategic directions and plans, whether or not such things are framed in formal policy documents.

Accordingly, this project adopted a very broad definition of university ‘policy’, particularly when considering the core sample of policy statements where ‘clusters’ or linked texts were examined.

SLIDE – GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

Policy instruments are subordinate to governance instruments. The research identified a range of terms for university governance and policy instruments.
Governance instruments included: university legislation (Australian universities only), University By-Laws, Statutes, Rules, Regulations and Orders. Overall, University legislation, and the terms By-laws, Statutes and Rules were most prevalent.

The research suggests that the closer the governance instrument to legislation the more likely it is to be phrased using legal terminology. This is particularly the case for governance instruments (and policy provisions embedded in governance instruments) focusing on misconduct and disciplinary matters.

**SLIDE – POLICY INSTRUMENTS**

More variation was recorded in relation to terms used for policy instruments identified in University Policy Frameworks or Policy on Policy statements. This included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Policy Nomenclature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Procedures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guidelines</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local policy and other documents</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the most commonly used terms for policy instruments were:

– Policy (for university-wide and local policy)
– Procedure and
– Guideline.

**SLIDE – POLICY APPROVAL**

Policy approval authorities were primarily the:

– Council; or
– Council and/or Vice-Chancellor; or
– Council and/or Vice-Chancellor and/or Senior Executive (member or committee); or
– In a small number of instances Academic Board/Senate.

The place of local policy within most University Policy Frameworks examined was unclear. Approval authorities for local policy were not clearly defined in the majority of University Policy Frameworks examined. However, a number of documents available through university websites (including in some instances University Policy Repositories) are clearly local policies. In some instances, such local policy appears to sit outside the University’s Policy Framework.

**SLIDE – HIERARCHY TABLE**

University Policy Framework components may be contextualised by governance instruments and considered in terms of a hierarchy of approval authorities and sources.
Table 2: Hierarchy of Instruments, Approval Authorities and Application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INSTRUMENTS</th>
<th>APPROVAL AUTHORITY</th>
<th>AUTHORITY THROUGH</th>
<th>APPLICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University legislation</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Australian Constitution</td>
<td>University-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University By-Laws</td>
<td>Government or Council</td>
<td>Australian Constitution or University legislation</td>
<td>University-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutes</td>
<td>Government or Council</td>
<td>University legislation</td>
<td>University-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Council or Academic Senate</td>
<td>University legislation or Delegations of Authority</td>
<td>University-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Council and/or Vice-Chancellor and/or Senior Executive member</td>
<td>University legislation or Policy on Policy or Delegations of Authority</td>
<td>University-wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Policy on Policy</td>
<td>University-wide OR Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Policy on Policy</td>
<td>University-wide OR Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local policy</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Policy on Policy and practice</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table represents the hierarchical relationships between governance and policy instruments, their respective approval authorities and sources of authority.

As instruments progress from high level governance and policy principles to local processes, so too do approval authorities range from high level government and university bodies to various local authorities.

Approval authority is derived from a hierarchy of sources descending from the Australian constitution, through university legislation, delegations of authority statements and Policy on Policy statements to local practice. High level documents generally apply university-wide whereas local statements apply only on the local level.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

University Policy Frameworks explicitly identify distinct policy development cycle stages, and these generally fall within one of the following three approaches:

In the majority of instances examined – represented as Model 1 - University Policy Frameworks identify the stages of drafting, consultation, approval, promulgation and review.

Table 3: University Policy Development Cycle Stages: Models 1,2 and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Majority</th>
<th>Most of: Drafting, consultation, approval, promulgation and review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Most stages from Model 1, and one or more of: identification of policy requirements, nomination of responsible officers, endorsement, implementation, records management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Most stages from Model 1, and one or more of: identification of policy requirements, nomination of responsible officers, endorsement, implementation, records management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>Few</td>
<td>Most stages from Models 1 and 2, and one or more of: benchmarking, revision, quality control, monitoring, evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some universities identify both ‘Model 1’ stages and additional ones. This may be represented as Model 2 – involving one or more of the following: identification of policy requirements, nomination of responsible officers, endorsement, implementation and records management. It could be expected that most university policy development cycles involve these stages whether or not they are articulated in the University Policy Framework.
In a few instances – as represented by Model 3 - University Policy Frameworks identify other policy cycle stages which clearly add a quality dimension to the process. This is a mature model which includes one or more of the following: benchmarking, revision, quality control, monitoring and evaluation. University Policy Frameworks articulating such quality-related cycle stages could be expected to produce high quality policy.

Whilst a small number of universities selected specifically identify, or require, the stages identified in Model 3, the University of Wollongong is reasonably unique in requiring policy implementation evaluation and supporting such activity with a number of Policy Toolkit resources\(^5\).

**SLIDE – POLICY CYCLE**

The full range of policy development cycle stages identified includes: the identification of policy requirements, nomination of responsible officers, drafting, benchmarking, consultation, revision, quality control, endorsement, approval, promulgation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, review. Importantly, these cycle stages are not necessarily sequential.

As University Policy Frameworks mature, more universities may well focus on such value-adding policy cycle stages.

**SLIDE – POLICY FRAMEWORK OSCAR WINNER**

The research identified only a small number of instances where the university clearly articulated the:

- range and application of policy instruments under the University Policy Framework;
- approval and review processes and authorities; and
- requisite policy development cycle stages.

The Policy Framework / Policy on Policy OSCAR is awarded to the University of Wollongong for their Standard on UOW Policy and associated Procedure for the Development and Management of UOW Policy\(^6\).

Special mention is made of the:

- Victoria University of Wellington’s Policy Documentation Development Information\(^7\) statement;
- Swinburne University of Technology’s suite of documents, including the Policy Framework and Policy and Procedure Development and Management\(^8\) statement; and
- University of Adelaide’s University Policy Framework\(^9\).

**POLICY WEBSITES AND POLICY REPOSITORY**

**SLIDE – POLICY WEBSITES**

Almost all Universities targeted had one central Policy Website\(^10\). This central Policy Website generally functioned as:

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5. The University of Wollongong Policy Toolkit provides the following resources to support evaluation and review: Policy Review Schedule; Policy Issues Log; Training on Policy Development; Policy Development Stages Checklist - A Guide for Users; Good Policy Checklist; Introductory Guide to Plain English; Consultation Tips; Policy Project Schedule; Consultation – Summary of Feedback Template.


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University website search functionality varied considerably. For the purposes of this project searches were conducted, using numerous keyword variations, to locate the university:

- Policy Repository;
- Policy Framework;
- Policy on Policy;
- Plagiarism Policy;
- Environment (or Sustainability) Policy;
- Leave Without Pay Policy; and
- Credit Policy

from the university homepage, University Policy Repository, Governance Unit/Section webpage and various other avenues to locate source documents. Success varied considerably such that web navigability became a focus of the research.

Universities in the process of implementing a new University Policy Framework have a transitional period which impacts on the accessibility of policy documents and navigability of Policy Websites. For example, the University of Adelaide Policy Website explicitly advises that:

“The University has adopted a new policy framework and all policies are being progressively reviewed in the context of the new framework. Entries marked ‘unrevised’ are current, but are in the process of being reviewed under the new policy framework”.

Transitional advice such as this is particularly important where current policy instruments or individual documents sit outside a revised University Policy Framework.

University Policy Repository

Well-developed University Policy Repositories provided the authoritative source for (generally) university-wide policy. In most instances, relevant university-wide policy was also made available through other websites (e.g. Teaching and Learning, Research, corporate areas such as Occupational Health and Safety, Human Resources).

Where the integrity of the University Policy Repository is maintained, duplication of policy documentation in this manner increases accessibility and facilitates policy implementation. However, in some instances it was not clear which policy documentation represented the authoritative source, or whether some ‘local’ policy statements only available through local work/organisational unit websites complied with the University Policy Framework. Indeed in some instances it appeared that such local policy statements did not conform to University Policy Framework (or Policy on Policy) requirements.

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10 Charles Sturt University maintained two Policy Websites reflecting their approach to policy presentation (i.e. an Academic Manual and Administrative Manual), both of which represented authoritative policy sources. Bond University did not appear to have a central Policy Website.
The online presentation of policy documents, for example under policy themes or along organisational lines (e.g. teaching and learning, research, corporate sections) provides a useful overview for users and may lead to the coalescence of comprehensive suites of university policy.

**SLIDE – SKELETON UNIVERSITY POLICY WEBSITE**

A ‘good practice’ skeleton University Policy Website would include the following:

- Policy Framework
- Policy on Policy
- Policy Repository
- Policy Toolkit
- Policy News
- Records Management
- Legislation
- Governance
- Delegations of Authority
- Codes of Conduct and Charters
- University Plans and University Committees
- Agreements
- Contact

**University Policy Framework** - within information provided about:
- Components (e.g. Policy, Procedure, Guideline, Standard, Unit/Work Instruction);
- Approval authorities;
- University policy development cycle.

**University Policy on Policy** - within links to:
- Policy on Policy and associated Procedure;
- Policy Development Guideline.

**University Policy Repository** – with the following:
- Confirmation that the University Policy Repository is the authoritative source of policy;
- Good search functionality (e.g. the ANU Policy Repository is searchable by topic, title, type, audience, alphabetical list);
- Capacity to search the Policy Repository by policy category/theme (e.g. corporate, teaching and learning, research, community), which may reflect organisational structure to some extent;
- An interface between the Policy Repository and individual policy documents (e.g. the Edith Cowan University Policy Summary page lists: policy code, title, keywords, summary, revision date, file number, Policy Owner, txt and pdf versions, direct URL and category information);
- Consideration of the policy file format for ease of reading (e.g. html, pdf, txt, other; including screen readers for vision impaired).

**Policy Toolkit** – with links to:

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**UNSW provides a good Policy Toolkit which includes:**
- UNSW Policy Development Process (pamphlet);
- Policy Template (i/ headings only; ii/ explanatory detail);
- Procedure Template; Guideline Template; Protocol Template; Policy Cover Sheet Template; Procedure Cover Sheet Template; Guideline Cover Sheet Template; Implementation Plan Template; and **Helpful Hints – Research and Policy Analysis.**

The University of Wollongong Policy Toolkit is also a good model, and this provides: UOW Policy Template; UOW Procedure Template; Policy Implementation and Communication Plan; New Policy Proposal Form; Web Content Check-in Form; Policy Development Stages Checklist; A Guide for Users; Good Policy Checklist; Training on Policy Development; Consultation Tips; Policy Project Schedule; and
Policy News – with:
- A list of policies under development;
- Links to drafts policies for comment;
- A policy review schedule (e.g. University of Wollongong Policy Review Schedule).

Records Management – with:
- Information about the university records management systems and links to relevant webpages;
- Information about policy versioning (including previous versions of policy in case of complaint/dispute);
- Reference to university information / knowledge management.

Legislation – with links to:
- The foundation University Act;
- Relevant Commonwealth and State Government legislation (e.g. through Legal Unit webpage)

University Governance – with links to the:
- University’s Governance Unit and Council webpage;
- Governance instruments (e.g. By-laws, Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, Regulations).

Delegations of Authority – with links to the:
- Delegations of Authority Policy or Register (where established).

Codes of Conduct and Charters – with links to the:
- University Codes of Conduct/Practice/Ethics (e.g. Teaching and Learning, Research, Graduate Research)
- University Charter (where established).

University Plans – with links to the:
- University strategic plan;

Consultation – Summary of Feedback Template. The RMIT Policy Toolkit provides: Policy Framework; Policy Development and Review Procedure; Policy Template (i/ with comments; ii/ without comments) (restricted); Procedure Template (i/ with comments; ii/ without comments) (restricted); Policy Development Consultation and Feedback Template; Submission Template; Proposal for New Policy Form (restricted); Implementation Plan; RMIT University Writing Style Guide ; and Document Control Guidelines.
Thematic plans (e.g. Teaching and Learning, Research);
Local plans.

**University Committees** – with links to:
University governing body/council;
Peak decision-making committees.

**Agreements** – with links to:
Industrial agreements;
Relevant high level Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).

**University Calendar / Important Dates**

**Policies by Category**
For example, the University of Queensland Policy Website presents policies under the following themes: University Organisation and Governance, Occupational Health and Safety, Teaching and Learning, Research and Postgraduate Studies, Financial Management Practice Manual, Human Resources, Information Technology, Physical Facilities and Services, Community and Development Activities.

**SLIDE: POLICY WEBSITE OSCAR WINNER**

The best Policy Website examined was the ‘ANU Policies Website’\(^{12}\), particularly in relation to ease of locating and searching the Policy Repository and linking to university governance instruments.

Special Mention must be made of the University of Adelaide ‘University Policy and Procedures’ website\(^{13}\) for the best looking front page (entitled ‘Policy Repository and Policy Framework’), policy versioning and list of policies under review.

The University of Wollongong ‘Policy Directory’ website\(^{14}\) must also receive a special mention for their content searchable policy documents, policy review schedule and comprehensive Policy Toolkit.

**INDIVIDUAL POLICY STATEMENTS**

The University Policy Benchmarking Project also involved an examination of four discrete university policy statements to appreciate how University Policy Frameworks, Policy on Policy and policy development tools translated to university policy statements. The policies identified included two academic and two corporate policies, including:

- Plagiarism Policy (as an assessment-related, high risk academic policy);
- Environment Policy (as a corporate policy of topical interest);
- Leave Without Pay Policy (as a corporate, human resources policy); and
- Credit Policy (as a core ‘gatekeeper’ academic policy).

\(^{12}\) [http://policies.anu.edu.au/](http://policies.anu.edu.au/)
PLAGIARISM POLICY

SLIDE – LEGALISTIC LANGUAGE

The web-based search located Plagiarism Policy documentation for all but two of the selected universities\(^{15}\). This included:

- stand-alone Plagiarism, Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct Policies, Procedures and Guidelines;
- governance instruments such as Statutes and Regulations which dealt with academic misconduct in the form of plagiarism;
- policy provisions embedded in Codes of Conduct or Student Charters;\(^{16}\) and
- policy statements reflected in information resources\(^ {17}\).

As such, university policy regarding this matter is both mature and widely dispersed across a range of instruments; indeed more widely than any other discrete policy examined. The research also found a much closer relationship between plagiarism statements and high level university governance instruments, in this instance dealing with misconduct, than other policies examined. Plagiarism policies were also closely aligned with assessment and examinations policy, the institution’s privacy policy, student grievance procedures and rules for responsible practice in research (for graduate research students).

As we have seen the higher the governance or policy instrument the more likely the document is to be framed in ‘legalist’ language. In relation to Plagiarism Policy statements, with a few exceptions, the language is more legalistic where policy provisions are embedded in governance instruments such as Statutes and Regulations, and where policy provisions are directly related to student misconduct and appeal procedures. The extent to which language is legalistic also depends on the extent to which university practice (as embodied in policy) emphasises punitive or educative approaches to plagiarism.

SLIDE - PUNITIVE OR EDUCATIVE

The research found a significant point of differentiation in this regard, with some universities adopting a progressive, educative approach, whereas others – generally those which continued to rely primarily on student misconduct Statutes and Regulations – framed in punitive terms. The University of Adelaide Plagiarism Policy\(^{18}\) specifically notes that:

> “University rules, policies and guidelines tend to focus on the punitive aspects of procedures rather than the educative and often fail to articulate to students why the conventions of citing and referencing are an integral part of developing scholarly

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\(^{15}\) Auckland University of Technology where no documentation was found (noting that much is staff restricted); and Edith Cowan University, where references to plagiarism were found in the Assessment Policy and Academic Misconduct Rules, but no discrete policy statement was located.

\(^{16}\) For example, the Australian National University Policy: Code of Practice for Student Academic Integrity, Procedure: Code of Practice for Student Academic Integrity; University of Technology Sydney Student Charter; University of New South Wales Student Code of Conduct; and Otago University ‘Code of Student Conduct’ in their Discipline Regulations.

\(^{17}\) For example, refer to the University of Western Australia Plagiarism Statement, Guidelines on Plagiarism Detection Software: Minimum Essentials, Notes on Preventing Plagiarism, Recognising Plagiarism Checklist, A Brief Guide to Searching Online for Sources of Plagiarism and Plagiarism and Referencing: Guidelines and Penalties, which support their comprehensive Academic Conduct: Guidelines for Faculties and Other Teaching and Supervision Sections at UWA: Ethical Scholarship, Academic Literacy and Academic Misconduct.

writing skills, and why plagiarism is considered a serious offence in the academic environment” (p7).

The University of Queensland’s Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy19 is both non-legalistic and educative, and states, for example, that:

“... learning rests on and builds on the work and ideas of others. However, it is important that students in their learning acknowledge, through appropriate referencing, earlier work and research from which they have drawn conclusions or interpretations or might advance new ideas. This is fundamental to the concept of academic integrity in the western tradition” (p2).

SLIDE - COMPREHENSIVE PLAGIARISM POLICY

A progressive, comprehensive Plagiarism Policy would:

– Be framed in educative, non-legalistic terms;
– Clearly define plagiarism, differentiating between poor academic practice (i.e. ‘careless’ plagiarism) and intentional plagiarism (i.e. academic misconduct);
– Encompass undergraduate, postgraduate coursework and research students20;
– Outline academic staff responsibilities (e.g. educate students about good academic practice and adopt good practice assessment design);
– Outline student responsibilities, including responsibility to maintain standards of integrity;
– Clearly establish procedures for informing and educating students about good academic practice and academic integrity;
– Clearly identify, as the University of Queensland does, “procedures for investigating and assessing suspected cases of misconduct [including plagiarism], the jurisdiction and penalty powers of decision-makers, and the consequent penalties for misconduct”21;
– Ensure procedures are fair, consistent, transparent, confidential, equitable, and provide for appropriate representation and support;
– Establish differential responses to:
  – naïve plagiarism or poor academic practice and intentional plagiarism;
  – suspected plagiarism within formative and summative assessment exercises;
  – consequent approaches may include providing resources and advice regarding good scholarship and giving penalties for academic misconduct in the form of plagiarism;
– Identify whether differential penalties will be applied at ‘breakpoints’ based on the proportion of material plagiarised, where both quantitative and qualitative assessments contribute to an overall determination (e.g. quantitative - >10% minor; 10-25% moderate; <25% major; qualitative – contextual factors or mitigating circumstances22);
– Refer to student appeal and grievance procedures;
– Maintain a central academic misconduct register or database for management and monitoring purposes;
– Establish a position on the use of plagiarism detection software (e.g. Turnitin, MOSS, SafeAssign) for both educative and plagiarism detection purposes as one component of the institution’s approach to fostering good academic practice23;

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19 http://www.uq.edu.au/hupp/?page=25128
20 The RMIT Management of Plagiarism in Research Programs Procedure (http://www.rmit.com/browse;ID=v0al8mumzqe41) deals with graduate research students in particular.
22 University of Western Australia Guidelines on Plagiarism Detection Software: Minimum Essentials, pp3-4.
23 The University of Western Australia examined practical, legal and ethical issues associated with the introduction of plagiarism detection software in their Guidelines on Plagiarism Detection Software: Minimum Essentials, http://www.teachingandlearning.uwa.edu.au/staffnet/policies/conduct/plagiarism, 2007. Swinburne University of Technology’s Plagiarism Policy specifically “outlines the use of plagiarism detection tools, and details how these tools should be used primarily for
Where adopted, advise students through a range of avenues that such software will be used and copies of works may be held in software databases (e.g. assignment coversheets, unit outlines, assessment guides, introductory lectures, university website etc);

- Procedural templates, including flowcharts and notification letters and reporting proformas;

- For New Zealand universities, resolution processes in keeping with commitments under the Treaty of Waitangi. For example, the Victoria University of Wellington’s Student Conduct Statute states that “The University is committed to acknowledging the Treaty of Waitangi by working in partnership with Maori. The spirit of tikanga is to seek resolutions to disputes and complaints in a manner that encourages a facilitated open exchange of views with a view to seeking consensus and acceptance from all parties as to the resolution”\(^\text{24}\) (p6).

**SLIDE – PLAGIARISM POLICY WINNER**

The winner of the Plagiarism Policy OSCAR is the University of Queensland for their *Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Student Discipline and Misconduct Matters*\(^\text{25}\) which incorporates many of these points and adopts an educative, non-legalistic approach. Special mention must also be made of the University of Adelaide’s *Plagiarism Policy*\(^\text{26}\) and University of Western Australia’s *Guidelines for Faculties and Other Teaching and Supervision Sections at UWA: Ethical Scholarship, Academic Literacy and Academic Misconduct*\(^\text{27}\) which both provide good practice models.

**ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

**SLIDE - ENVIRONMENT POLICY: MINIMALIST APPROACH**

The web-based search located 10 Environment or Environmental Sustainability Policy statements\(^\text{28}\). An examination of these policy statements suggests that environment policy development is an emerging priority for Australian universities, whereas the Victorian University of Wellington’s approach suggests that either the Victorian University itself, or the New Zealand higher education sector more generally, is well progressed in this field.

Most Australian university environment policies examined included minimalist information regarding the organisation’s position on the environment, or environmental sustainability. Indeed most environment policies foreshadowed limited activity prior to the establishment of Environment Committees and/or Environmental Management Plans. It may well be that Environment Policy development has been undertaken to fulfil legislative, regulatory or audit requirements before the organisations themselves have established their positions or developed expertise in this area.

The ‘minimalist approach’ results in Environment Policy provisions which:

- Confirm the university’s commitment to meeting environmental obligations, locally and globally;
- Commit the university to the implementation of ‘best practice’ environmental management (without stipulating detail);

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\(^{25}\) http://www.uq.edu.au/hups/?page=25128

\(^{26}\) http://www.adelaide.edu.au/policies/230

\(^{27}\) http://www.teachingandlearning.uwa.edu.au/staffnet/policies/23

\(^{28}\) Charles Sturt University has a *Campus Environmental Committees Structure and Terms of Reference* statement; however this does not articulate university policy. Policy statements were not located for: University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia, Otago University or the Auckland University of Technology.
Confirm the university’s commitment to complying with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements;

Assert that the Environment Policy will comply with related university policy and meet ethical environmental obligations;

Commit the university to implementing generally non-specified environmental sustainability-related initiatives;

Promote broad ‘green’ principles (e.g. ‘avoid, reduce, re-use, recycle’); and

Commit to undertake best practice environmental sustainability focussed teaching and research.

**SLIDE – EMERGING POLICY PROVISIONS**

As Environment Policy sophistication increases, additional policy provisions are found where the university commits to:

- Introduce a range of continuous performance monitoring, improvement and reporting processes (e.g. through the establishment of an Environmental Management System);
- Develop an Environmental Management Plan detailing principles, targets and initiatives;
- Establish an Environment Committee with responsibility for overseeing university environmental sustainability-related initiatives, monitoring and reporting systems;
- Promote environmental awareness and community outreach; and
- Minimise environmental risk(s).

**SLIDE – SKELETON ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

A comprehensive Environment Policy may articulate how a University will:

- Sustainably manage the University’s **natural environment** (i.e. natural and physical resources; and promote the concept of a ‘harmonious campus’);
- Sustainably manage the University’s **developed environment** (i.e. infrastructure; transportation options including the University vehicle fleet; sustainable procurement; footprint reduction strategies);
- Sustainably manage the University’s **use of natural resources** (i.e. minimise consumption of water, energy and materials; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; sustainable waste management, infrastructure design and engineering solutions);
- Undertake quality teaching and research with an environmental sustainability focus;
- Establish environmental emergency procedures (e.g. to cater for pollution);
- Recognise the interdependence of the physical and cultural environments; and
- For New Zealand universities, implementation consistent with the Treaty of Waitangi (e.g. consideration of Maori perspectives and the exercise of environment guardianship and stewardship).

**SLIDE - ENVIRONMENT POLICY OSCAR WINNER**

The clear winner of the OSCAR for the best Environment Policy is the Victorian University of Wellington for their **Environmental Policy and Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Guidelines**. Indeed the research suggests that New Zealand universities have much to teach their Australian counterparts in policy development for somewhat ‘tricky’ issues such as the environment and equity (e.g. indigenous peoples, gender and disability).

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29 [http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/facilities.aspx#environment](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/facilities.aspx#environment)
LEAVE WITHOUT PAY POLICY

SLIDE – LEAVE WITHOUT PAY POLICY

Leave Without Pay Policy was chosen as a practical Human Resources Policy in contrast with the academic and ‘new’ (environmental) policy areas examined.

The web-based search did not readily locate Leave Without Pay Policies for ¼ of the sample. Where the search did locate such policies (12), over half had discrete Leave Without Pay Policies, and the remainder had broad Leave Policies with sub-sections focussed on various forms of leave (including Leave Without Pay in all but one instance).

Discrete Leave Without Pay Policies examined tended to better articulate institutional principles regarding Leave Without Pay than consolidated Leave Policies or Leave Manual chapters. However, where consolidated policies are established, it should be feasible to make comprehensive provisions for the various forms of leave.

Some categories of policy, primarily human resources and finance, are packaged and presented as manuals. This may reflect:

- legislative requirements (e.g. Financial Administration and Audit Act 1977 [Qld] requires universities to maintain a Financial Management Practice Manual) or
- industry practice (e.g. provision of operating instructions for systems).

Where manuals are in place, there is a noticeable difference between policy provisions packaged as ‘manual’ sections and formal university policy statements. Indeed those policy areas which tended to adopt this approach – namely Human Resources, Finance and some facilities policies – frequently included great detail (for example, to the Work Instruction level), and appeared sheltered from university policy framework requirements. Given the variations in this approach, the research was not able to determine whether documents providing ‘practices and controls’ are also able to clearly articulate institutional principles as the two tend to serve different purposes.

Analysis of Leave Without Pay Policy statements suggests that human resources policy both reflects and shapes university culture. Language is powerful. For example, whilst some university’s leave without pay eligibility criteria:

- restrict such leave to circumstances advantaging the employing university; or
- provide no guarantee that general staff substantive positions will be held open

the UNSW policy states that:

“The University recognises that the abilities of its ... staff should be made available for the benefit of the community ... (where there will be) no serious impediment to the proper discharge of the University’s corporate responsibilities”.

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30 University of Wollongong (staff restricted), Bond University, Edith Cowan University, Auckland University of Technology
31 University of Queensland, University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia, University of Technology Sydney, Otago University, Auckland University of Technology
32 Charles Darwin University, Charles Sturt University, Australian National University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Swinburne University of Technology
33 University of Queensland, Leave Without Pay Policy and Procedure
34 University of Queensland, Leave Without Pay Policy and Procedure
A number of universities explicitly support leave without pay for activities considered to be in the national interest (e.g. employment with a government or public body\textsuperscript{35}; or appointment under an international assistance scheme such as the UNESCO\textsuperscript{36}). In almost all instances, universities explicitly make provision for leave without pay on the basis of compassionate grounds.

**SLIDE – SKELETON LEAVE WITHOUT PAY POLICY**

Benchmarking both discrete and consolidated Leave Without Pay Policies suggests that a ‘good practice’ policy may articulate university principles in relation to the following ‘ingredients’:

**Compliance (Industrial Instruments and Legislation)**
- Awards;
- Industrial Agreements; and
- Legislation (e.g. NZ *Holidays Act 2003*).

**Purposes**
- *Personal reasons* (e.g. compassionate grounds – illness, family, cultural, or carer responsibilities; supplement to parental leave; or for recreational, sporting or vacation purposes);
- *Mutually beneficial to University and applicant* (e.g. education; professional development; secondment; alternative short-term employment; consultancy; research); and
- *In the national interest* (e.g. employment with a government or public body; appointment under an international assistance scheme; or contesting Federal or State Parliament elections).

**Eligibility and Assessment Criteria**
- Category of staff (e.g. continuing and fixed-term staff; probationary staff; casual staff excluded);
- Paid leave balance (i.e. balance must be exhausted, other than for applications for carer responsibilities, secondment, or appointment under international assistance scheme);
- Operational needs of relevant work or organisational unit;
- Likelihood of return to work following completion of leave without pay;
- Capacity to keep the applicant’s position open during the period of leave without pay;
- Consideration of alternatives (e.g. secondment or staff exchange); and
- Exceptions at the discretion of the Approval Authority.

**Minimum / Maximum Time Limits**
- Minimum: 1 hour/1 day/12 hour security shift;
- Maximum: 1/2/3 years;
- Maximum time limits may differ depending on the stated purpose for leave without pay;
- Leave without pay may be taken on a part/full-time basis’; and
- Extensions at the discretion of the Approval Authority.

**Approval Authority**
- Approval Authorities clearly stated; and
- Differentiation based on leave without pay application length.

**Impact on Other Entitlements (e.g. LWOP over 20 days)**
- Calculation of continuity of service;
- Accrual of annual leave, sick leave and long service leave;
- Eligibility for parental leave, study assistance and the special studies program;

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\textsuperscript{35} University of New South Wales, *Leave Without Pay and Secondment Policy*

\textsuperscript{36} University of Western Australia, *University Policy on: Leave Without Pay*
Granting of salary increment(s);
Workers Compensation;
Probation;
Payment for public holidays; and
Exceptions at the discretion of the Approval Authority.

Superannuation Arrangements

Responsibilities
Manager/Supervisor; and
Applicant (e.g. re-arrange salary deductions; Superannuation; remain informed of university activities).

Application Procedure
Complete Application Form;
Applicant agreement to exhaust accrued/accruing paid prior to taking leave without pay;
Approval process; and
Return to work notification provisions.

Advice

SLIDE - LEAVE WITHOUT PAY POLICY OSCAR WINNER

The University document which best reflects this ‘good practice’ skeleton is the University of Technology Sydney Leave Without Pay Guidelines37.

CREDIT POLICY

SLIDE – CREDIT POLICY

Credit, Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning Policies were located for most Australian and all New Zealand Universities38. As a ‘gatekeeper’ academic policy, credit policies may be presented in Credit Regulations or Rules, and mirror implied or explicit statements regarding academic quality, integrity and institutional standing.

Credit Policies, whilst mature and well developed across the sector, vary from conservative through progressive. For example, some university Credit Policy statements embrace recognition of prior informal learning and cross-sectoral articulation, whereas others limit credit to like higher education credit transfer.

In many cases Credit Policy provisions are directly related to university Admissions, Enrolment and Assessment Policy. Credit Policy is also shaped by higher education legislation, including:

– the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 which regulates provision to international students and associated VISA requirements; and
– Higher Education Support Act 2003 which prohibits the imposition of certain student fees.

37 http://www.hru.uts.edu.au/manual/4cond/conditions.html#4.6
38 Charles Darwin University did not have a Credit Policy, however the Students Policy made minor reference to credit. Searches did not locate the ANU Credit Policy or Bond University Credit Policy.
It is anticipated that the impending release of the *AQF National Policy and Guidelines on Credit Arrangements* will motivate the revision of Australian university Credit Policies.

To a much greater extent than any other ‘core sample’ policy examined, university-wide Credit Policy is frequently supported by Faculty or local policy as Faculties generally administer credit application, assessment and approval processes.

**SLIDE – CREDIT POLICY DEVELOPMENT INFLUENCES**

University Credit Policies examined suggest that Credit Policy development has been influenced by a body of work from Commonwealth, State and non-government organisations and developments including:

- Universities Australia (and formerly Australian Vice-Chancellor’s Committee) credit transfer documents\(^{39}\);
- Codes of Practice\(^{40}\);
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) developments, including the:
  - emergence of Registered Training Organisations (RTO);
  - establishment of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF);
  - establishment of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)\(^{41}\); and
- National and international qualification recognition services\(^{42}\).

**SLIDE – CREDIT POLICY THEMES**

This research identified some consistent themes in comprehensive Credit Policy statements including:

- Qualification portability and articulation (VET ↔ HE);
- Inter-sectoral linkages and collaboration\(^{43}\):
  - between universities (e.g. Go8, Australian Technology Network of Universities);
  - across sectors (e.g. Registered Training Organisations ↔ TAFE ↔ Higher Education); and
  - within dual-sector institutions;
- Developments regarding the recognition of various modes of formal and informal learning;
- Efficiencies in the education and training system;
- The role of credit and RPL approval in maintaining qualification and institutional integrity; and
- The capacity of RPL, in particular, as an equity mechanism.

**SLIDE – JOINT OSCAR WINNERS CREDIT POLICY**

The Credit Policy Oscar is awarded jointly.

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\(^{39}\) Some Credit Policies specifically refer to the *Credit Transfer Principles: Guidelines on Recognition of Prior Learning* and *Guidelines on Cross-Sector Qualification Linkages and Provision of Education to International Students* Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities.

\(^{40}\) Some Credit Policies refer to the *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students, 2007*.


\(^{42}\) For example, the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) register of Higher Education providers, the National Tertiary Information System (NTIS) register of Registered Training Organisations (RTO) and National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR).

\(^{43}\) For example, agreements in place include the *Group of Eight Credit Transfer Agreement* (March 2007) and *Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) Guidelines*. 
Swinburne’s policy confirms their legislative mandate under the “Swinburne University of Technology Act 1992 to provide a multi-level system of post-secondary programs with provision for the facilitation of movement between courses”\textsuperscript{44}. Swinburne is awarded the joint Credit Policy Oscar for their comprehensive suite of Credit Transfer and Exemptions Policy statements spanning their higher education and TAFE sectors\textsuperscript{45}.

Edith Cowan University\textsuperscript{46} is also awarded the joint Credit Policy Oscar for their comprehensive Advanced Standing Policy, Course Assessment Guidelines and Appeal Guidelines.

**SO WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?**

**SLIDE**

The research suggests that a quality approach to the management of university policy may involve the following key features:

- Articulation of the University Policy Framework (in a Policy on Policy);
- Clarity regarding policy approval pathways;
- Ensuring that nominated policy approval authorities are consistent with university foundation legislation, Delegations of Authority and Policy on Policy;
- Clarification regarding the policy development process or cycle and incorporation of quality assurance stages (e.g. benchmarking);
- Provision of policy development tools and resources (e.g. Policy Toolkit);
- Maintenance of a searchable, central Policy Repository;
- Requirement for genuine consultation and broad communication mechanisms to promote transparency and facilitate implementation;
- Appreciation of change management requirements;
- Ensuring ongoing monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation; and
- Establishment of transparent policy review mechanisms in accordance with review schedules.

**SLIDE – SUMMARY OF OSCAR WINNERS**

University websites – as a platform for university policy management – have provided a window to good policy practice.

The Policy Oscars have been awarded as follows:

- **Best University Policy Framework / Policy on Policy** – University of Wollongong
- **Best University Policy Website** – Australian National University
- **Best Plagiarism Policy** – University of Queensland
- **Best Environment Policy** – Victorian University of Wellington
- **Best Leave Without Pay Policy** – University of Technology Sydney
- **Best Credit Policy** – Swinburne University and Edith Cowan University

and these universities are deserving of recognition and modelling.

\textsuperscript{44} Swinburne University of Technology, Credit Transfer – TAFE Policy and Procedure, p3.
\textsuperscript{45} Credit Transfer Agreements – Approvals Policy, Credit Transfer and Exemptions – Higher Education, Credit Transfer and Exemptions – TAFE, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Higher Education, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – TAFE, Swinburne Credit Transfer Database
\textsuperscript{46} Advanced Standing Policy, Guidelines for Assessing Courses of Other Institutions for Entry Into, and Advanced Standing for, ECU Courses; Advanced Standing Appeal Guidelines.
The Policy Oscars have exposed and recognised but a small number of good practices currently in place to support high quality university policy. Our discussions today can continue to identify and celebrate good university policy practice.

Thank you.