Policy on Development, Approval and Management of University Policies

I. Purpose and Scope

University policies promote the university’s mission, enhance operational efficiency and university governance, and communicate expectations relating to conduct. Northeastern University expects faculty, staff, students and visiting faculty and scholars, as well as volunteers and agents when they act on behalf of the university to be familiar with and adhere to all applicable university policies. In order to promote accessibility to current policies, as well as consistency and clarity of content, this policy establishes a framework, common format, roles and responsibilities and the process for development, adoption, review, revision, retirement, and dissemination of all university policies as defined in this policy.

This policy applies to all existing and proposed university policies, except that the approval process described does not apply to the Faculty and Student Handbooks, the Athletics Compliance Policies Handbook, or the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogues, which follow their own approval processes.

II. Definitions

For purposes of this policy:

A Policy is a high-level statement of guiding principles and standards that articulates the institution's values and communicates behavioral expectations and requirements related to a specific topic or area.

A University Policy is one with broad application across the university, or to major components of the university, that
enhances the university’s mission, fosters compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and/or internal standards, promotes operational efficiencies, and seeks to reduce institutional risk.

A Unit-level Policy is one that applies only to a specific unit, or that is an internal operational policy for a specific division or department. Examples include, but are not limited to, parking policies specific to the different campuses or properties of the university, or dress or access policies specific to different lab/research areas at the university. No unit of the university may adopt or maintain a Unit-level Policy that is inconsistent with, conflicts with, appears to or otherwise expands the obligations of the university beyond those set forth in official University Policies.

Procedures set forth identified steps for implementing a policy.

The Responsible Office/Department is the university office responsible for developing and administering a policy, which includes dissemination of the policy, development of procedures where appropriate, communications and training related to the policy, and timely revisions.

The Policy Oversight Committee is the standing committee comprising representatives from key areas across the university that has been established by senior leadership and charged with overseeing the policy process including proposals for new policies; review of policy drafts and revisions; advice to units on policy development; and facilitation of policy review and approval by senior leadership.

The Policy Template is the standard format that university policies must follow. It includes a short, descriptive title; statement of the purpose and scope of the policy; any applicable definitions and exclusions; the policy itself; and additional information, such as enforcement; and contact information for questions or guidance on the policy.

III. Policy

a) Authority

Working through the policy oversight committee, responsible offices/departments are charged with overseeing the initial development, regular review, and proposed revisions of university policies related to their area of responsibility.
b) Development & Format

University policies may be initiated by individual departments, colleges, schools, institutes, or other administrative or operating units. New university policies must be sponsored by the responsible office/department with oversight in that area. Development of a proposed policy must be approved by the policy oversight committee, generally in advance of drafting the proposed policy, through submission of a policy proposal form, found on the policy webpage. Each policy must follow the format provided by the policy template, should generally refrain from including procedures, and be drafted in clear, concise language.

c) Review and Approval

All university polices require central institutional approval, either by the senior leadership team or by the board of trustees where approval by the board is required or appropriate. The policy oversight committee provides initial review of draft policies, and may suggest or require revisions towards a final draft. Once a draft is considered final, the policy oversight committee will facilitate its submission through the appropriate approval process.

Prior to submission for approval, draft university policies must be presented for legal review by the Office of the General Counsel, as well as review by any office(s) directly responsible for implementing a substantive aspect of the policy. Where there are any objections that are not reconciled, the responsible office/department will note those reservations. The final draft policy will then be submitted by the sponsoring responsible office/department to their area senior leader for final review before submission, as required, to the senior leadership team or board for approval. Policies submitted to the senior leadership team or board for approval shall also include a proposed implementation and communication plan. Once approved, the policy may be published to the university community consistent with the approved plan.

d) Training

If training on a new policy or substantially-revised policy is necessary or advisable, the responsible office/department will develop or identify, and provide or make available appropriate training for the university community or relevant sub-group within the university community, consulting with the compliance and/or human resources departments, as appropriate.
e) Review/Revision

The responsible office/department is responsible for regular review/updating of its policies and for timely revisions to reflect changes in applicable law that implicate provisions of the policy. Proposed revisions are subject to the requirements of this policy for drafting, formatting, review and submission to the policy oversight committee, as well as dissemination and training where appropriate. The compliance department will archive previous versions of all policies.

f) Policy Retirement

If the responsible office/department concludes that a policy within its area has no continuing applicability, it may propose retirement of the policy through the same review and approval channels set forth in Section III(c) of this policy. Retired university policies will be archived but accessible from the University Policy website.

IV. Additional Information

Nothing in this Policy limits the authority of the university to issue, amend, or withdraw a policy.

Additional resources can be found on the University Policy website, including:

- Policy Communication and Implementation Plan
- Policy Development Guidelines
- Policy Proposal Form
- Policy Template
- Policy FAQ’s

V. Contact Information

Compliance Department, (617) 373-8102

Human Resources, (617) 373-2230