



How to write policies for The Aurum Project

A guide supporting *The Aurum Project Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

The Aurum Project

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Context: How does a Research Pod in The Aurum Project or other team or committee formulate an action plan or decide on a policy?

This Aurum Project (AP) policy about how to write policies outlines:

- What is an AP Research Pod?
- AP is a TEAL organisation
- What is a policy?
- The pros and cons of writing a policy

- Characteristics of a good policy
- Policy vs procedure
- Before you begin writing your policy
- Guidelines for writing a policy
- Writing style
- Key elements of a standard policy

Who does this policy apply to?

Any member of AP who wants/needs to document a way of enshrining AP values through action.

What is an AP Research Pod (Pod)?

An AP Research Pod (Pod) is a research team. Any writing of guidelines and policy will benefit by first examining these goals and aspirations which can be read in the: [Aurum Project: Teal Organisational Theory Statement](#).

AP aims to enable personal, professional fulfillment and growth as well as deliver successful and purposeful research outcomes. The AP proposes this framework for policy development, with the principle that will enable members to follow guidelines for the joint development of relationships as well as research outcomes between AP members.

AP Management Committee also believes: it is critically important for members involved in Pods to be enabled to flourish, professionally and personally as they undertake the challenges of research. To achieve this environment for Pods and to build capacity, AP functions increasingly as a Teal Organisation.

AP is a Teal Organisation

A Teal Organisation is one which operates effectively, even at a large scale, with a system based on peer relationships. They set up structures, practices and policies in which people have high autonomy in their domain, and are accountable for coordinating with others.

As AP becomes a larger organisation it is even more important that members of Pods, volunteers, AP members, and employees carry out their work in line with AP goals and aspirations to work as a TEAL organisation.

What is a Policy?

A policy is simply a document or action plan that contains instructions that determine how things are done. It may define modes of conduct which reflect AP values and cultural structure:

1. It is the medium through which our AP aspirations are made known.
2. The AP policy manual and policy PDFs are used for onboarding new people
3. A policy ensures that decisions are made fairly, whether they concern individuals or AP as a whole.

The pros and cons of writing a policy.

Pros

It encourages accountability

A policy sets the standard for the way things unfold and is a history of how things have been done in the past. When a policy fails to adequately support the AP members in their AP activities, the learnings from that failure are used by the Management Committee and the Pod involved to improve, expand and update the policy. In this context the Management Committee is considered as the core Pod, who holds the values and mission of AP and the policy and procedures that allow this to manifest.

It doubles as a training manual

When a new person starts at AP we spend time with them, making sure they are properly onboarded. After this period, the policy manual becomes something to refer back to.

Cons

It might not allow for creative thinking

The idea of writing a policy which AP members must follow strictly might hamper their thinking. We would rather encourage people to be wholly present in the process which includes the emergence and evolution of their creative thinking.

Characteristics of a good policy

1. It is written in simple terms and clear language.
2. It has well-defined procedures. The procedures should clearly indicate how instructions in the policy should be carried out.
3. It isn't totally restrictive. Where possible, AP policy should present options - empowering Members with an increased sense of ownership.

These are the qualities of a good policy, and you must always keep them in mind when writing one. However, a policy should not be confused with other related terms or concepts.

Policy vs. procedure

The terms 'policy' and 'procedure' are often used interchangeably. However, they are different. A policy clearly states what AP management expects, while a procedure is a detailed description of how the instructions in the policy should be carried out.

So, while the policy states *what* should be done, the procedure describes *how* it should be done. A procedure can incorporate an allowance to be flexible in the way the procedure is carried out.

Before you begin writing your policy

Confirm that there is a need for your policy, and that one does not already exist. Before you even start creating a policy at all, you need the full support of the staff, members and/or management. Pull together a team to help the process of developing a policy. Pathways to inform the Management Committee of new policy development could be through notifying the Research Coordinator, or a Management Committee member in the Pod.

Guidelines for writing a policy

When you need to revisit a policy that seems outdated, firstly investigate the shortcomings of the current policy. To help with research, you might interview employees, members, discuss relevant topics with experts, and identify laws that correlate with your policies.

To put your best foot forward, find someone to help you make the first draft. An outsider may give an objective view of things.

Getting approval is the final step in the writing stage. AP Management Committee approves and registers the policy and you need to document this at the end of the policy and make a policy document number. Include the name of the approver, their position and date of approval.

Writing style

1. Use AP font and colours found in the policies document.
2. It should not be written in the first or second person but in the third person, e.g. he, she and it.
3. To avoid constant review, do not include any data that might easily get outdated.
4. Select your words very carefully. Use “must” and “should” sparingly.
5. When using acronyms, first spell out the words fully and then put the acronym in a bracket. e.g. the World Health Organization (WHO).

Key elements of a standard policy

1. **Template:** This document can be used as a template for formatting new policies including the following:
2. **Header:** AP name, contact details, ABN, logo and who the particular policy is being created for.
3. **Dates:** the date when the policy was initiated. If it is being reviewed, put the date of future review at the end of the document.
4. **Title:** reflect the total content of the policy.

5. **Authority's approval:** this includes the name of who approved the policy, this will appear at the end of the policy.
6. **Policy statement:** this is where you state in detail why the policy is being created. In this section, you answer the questions who, why, what, when, and where of the policy.
7. **Ensure that your policy is in line with the law**
8. **Procedure:** This section is where you indicate steps to help achieve the goals laid out in the policy statement.
9. **Page numbering, definitions and references** need to be included
10. **Different parties and responsibilities:** A list of various people that would be responsible for the policy. You may also include contact information.

Development of policy about how to write policies

(Review frequency - 3 yearly)

Policy Identifier / Version	PAP.V1 first draft by Susan Blackshaw & Linlee Jordan	Date review due	PAP.V1 reviewed and accepted by Vice Presidents Jane Lindsay and Susan Blackshaw from Management Committee	Date PAP.V1 accepted and included in policy and procedure book
AP/PAP.V1	31/8/2021	31/8/24	14/12/2021	15/12/2021
AP/PAP.V2	29/04/2024 Reviewed by Dr Celeste Salter & Linlee Jordan	29/04/2027	23/7/2024 PAP.V2 Accepted by President Nyema Hermiston Management Committee	26/7/2024 Uploaded to AP website

