POLICY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1. OVERVIEW
A system is an organized and coordinated method of doing something in which a fixed plan and a set of rules are followed. Dhofar University (DU) has established a Policy Management System (PMS) that is in compliance with the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and Oman Academic Accreditation Authority (OAAA) mandates. This system governs the development, implementation, and review of DU policies, procedures, guidelines, and related documents. These policies and procedures are uniformly implemented, continuously monitored and regularly revised.

The policy management system assists DU in achieving its mission, vision, values goals and objectives. It promotes operational efficiency and reduces the associated risks. It also ensures that DU complies with the MOHE and OAAA mandates and community expectations.

The Policy Management System in DU consists of three phases:

1.1. Pre-development
In pre-development stage, the need for the policy is established by Designated Authorities (DA). This is done through the study of current practices, survey of stakeholders, consultation with senior staff and needs analysis.

1.2. Development
In development stage, the policy proposal, which originates from any of the stakeholder(s), passes through Designated Authorities, Quality Assurance (QA) Unit and Policy Management Committee (PMC), before it comes to the University Council (UC) for final approval.

At every stage the proposal is thoroughly reviewed; and if it is found to be appropriate it is forwarded further; otherwise it is returned back for necessary modification. Wherever necessary, the stakeholders to whom the proposed policy will apply are also consulted in the development or revision of the policy.

1.3. Maintenance and Review
Once the policy is approved by the University Council, it is centrally maintained by QA Unit and uniformly applied throughout the University. The policy is also periodically reviewed and if necessary appropriately revised.

2. POLICY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK
A framework is a set of concepts, assumptions, practices and rules used to elaborate what is to be done and how that is to be done.

The policy management framework in DU consists of four components:
2.1. Policy

Policy is a guiding principle used to set direction in DU. It sets standards which guide DU in carrying out its activities. It provides guidance and assistance to DU staff to ensure systematic administration of university affairs.

A policy statement is an essential tool for academic and administrative practices. It sets expectations for the performance of individuals and groups, and leads to the development of specific procedures that should be followed to successfully implement the policy.

The success of a policy's implementation depends on the ability of the author(s) of the policy statement to effectively communicate the meaning of the policy to the stakeholders to whom it applies. The more explicit and clear the policy statement, the more likely it will succeed.

DU has two types of policies.

a) Academic
b) Administrative

2.2. Procedures

Procedure describes a way of accomplishing something. These are the steps for successful application and implementation of a policy. They are designed as a series of steps to be followed so as to ensure consistency and reduce process variation. They direct operational activities and assign responsibilities. They detail the implementation of policy, aid the operations of the University, and comply with external requirements.

2.3. Guidelines

Guidelines provide additional details on policies. However, unlike procedures, they are not mandatory. They recommend practices and processes, and provide illustrative examples for the exercise of judgment. They help to ensure consistency in implementing the policy.

2.4. Forms

Forms are used to ensure uniformity and consistency in all the stages of policy management system. A set of standardized forms are developed for each policy; and these are used uniformly across the university.

3. DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION

While developing and applying the policies, DU ensures that the following aspects are given due consideration.

- The policies represent and support DU mission, vision, values, goals and objectives.
- These policies are relevant in the present context.
• There is transparency in their intention and meaning.
• These policies comply with DU Bylaws as well as MOHE and OAAA mandates.
• A policy custodian is appointed by the PMC to ensure the safe storage, proper implementation, and periodic review of the policy.
• A glossary of terms and definitions is prepared for each policy
• All the stakeholders comply with the policies and procedures while carrying out their activities.
• The policies are applied uniformly and consistently throughout the university
• A specific timeframe is prescribed for the review of each policy.
• Once the policy is approved by the UC (Board of Trustees if necessary), it is disseminated to all the concerned stakeholders.
• Policies are published on DU website.
• Training sessions are conducted for the key personnel to ensure that they are able to implement the policy effectively.
• Implementation and compliance of the policies are monitored.
• Stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback.

4. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The policy development process in DU consists of five (or sometimes six) stages:

4.1. Origin of proposal

The policy proposal can originate from any of the stakeholder(s) within or outside the University. The stakeholder(s) will submit this policy proposal to the Designated Authorities in DU.

4.2. Review by Designated Authorities

The Designated Authorities in DU are Office of VC, Office of DVC, Academic Colleges, FP Unit, Non-Academic Departments and QA Unit.

These authorities discuss the policy proposal received by them. They check the governing documents such as DU Bylaws, QA Manual and Government Legislation in order to ensure that the proposed policy does not conflict with the existing policies and legislation. After necessary refinement the proposal is forwarded to QA Unit in the prescribed format.

Sometimes the topic of the proposed policy may be very much trivial. It may not be necessary to have a policy on such issues. In such cases, the designated authorities will not forward the policy proposal to QA unit; and at the same time the stakeholder from whom it was received will be informed about that.
4.3. Review by Quality Assurance Unit

QA Unit reviews the proposed policy for its technicalities and appropriateness; and decides whether to forward it to the PMC for further processing or not. If QA Unit notices some deficiencies, the proposal is returned to the concerned Designated Authority for necessary modifications; and if it is appropriate, it is forwarded to Policy Management Committee.

4.4 Review by Policy Management Committee

Once the proposed policy is received by Policy Management Committee, it reviews the same to ensure that it is in conformity with the DU mission, vision, values, goals and objectives. If PMC notices some deficiencies, the proposal is returned to QA Unit for necessary modifications; and if it is appropriate, it is forwarded to the UC for final approval.

4.5 Review and Approval by University Council

The University Council approves the proposed policy if it is convinced about its technical and legal aspects; otherwise it is returned to Policy Management Committee for necessary modification. The approved policy will be considered effective from the date specified in the policy document; and if no such date is specified in that case from the date of its approval by the UC.

4.6 Review and Approval by Board of Directors

There will be some policies which would require the approval of Board of Trustees (BOT). All these proposed policies will be forwarded by UC to the Board of Trustees for its approval. Normally the BOT will approve these proposed policies. In very exceptional cases, when BOT feels that the proposed policies needs some modification, it will be sent back to UC long with the proposed modification. After these modifications are made by UC, the proposed policy is assumed to be approved by BOT.

5. POLICY DOCUMENT

The policy document in DU consists of fourteen sections:

5.1. Policy Title

The title of the policy should describe the policy accurately. The title must end with the word “Policy” and must not start with the word “The”.

(e.g. ‘Promotion Policy’ rather than ‘The Policy of Promotion’)

5.2. Policy Number

Each policy is given a specific number which is alpha-numeric.

(e.g. DU-AC-001-V1)

Here DU stands for Dhofar University, AC indicates it is academic policy, 001 indicates the policy number and V1 indicates version of the policy)
5.3. Effective Date

Unless otherwise specified, the policy becomes effective from the date of its approval by the UC (in some cases BOT).

5.4. Next Review Date

Normally, this will be done every two years from the date of approval of the policy, unless an earlier review is sought by the custodian of the policy.

5.5. Purpose and Need

Discuss why the policy is needed in one paragraph.

5.6. Scope of Application

Specify the stakeholders to whom the policy applies.
(e.g. Staff, Students, college, department)

5.7. Policy Statement

This is a brief and formal paragraph which clearly states the mandatory principle of the policy.

5.8. Procedures

It is necessary to prepare procedures for each policy. As far as possible all the details should be given here. This helps in ensuring uniformity in application and at the same time avoids confusion.

5.9. Guidelines

These additional steps or details may be provided in case of some policies and not necessarily all. These are not mandatory, but assist the implementing authority in taking judicious decisions.

5.10. Custodian

Unless otherwise specified, QA Unit will be the custodian of all the policies in DU.

5.11. Responsibility for implementation

Name the persons responsible (position only) for the implementation, compliance and monitoring of the policy and procedures.

5.12. Contact Person for answering queries

Specify the position of the person who is responsible for answering queries regarding the policy.

5.13. Key Stakeholders consulted

Identify the positions or bodies in DU who have been consulted in the development or revision of the policy. This may also include external stakeholders. Use positions and not names of people.
5.14. Approval details

In DU the ultimate authority to approve the policies is UC (in some cases BOT).

Give the following details about the approval.

Meeting number: xx
Meeting date: xx/xx/xxxx
Meeting Minutes item number: xx

6. GUIDELINES IN WRITING THE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- Use clear and simple language. Avoid unnecessary technical jargon and fancy words.
- The same words should be used consistently throughout the policy for the same concept.
- Use gender-neutral language.
- Use the active rather than passive voice.
- Use concise or short sentences (not more than 15 words per sentence).
- Compose short paragraphs (not exceeding five sentences).
- Use must or will if an action is mandatory.
- Use should if an action is recommended.
- Use may if an action is permissible.
- Avoid acronyms and abbreviations except when necessary. If you have to use an acronym, spell it out the first time you use it.
- Use titles of positions instead of using specific names.
- As far as possible start with an action verb.

(e.g. “Submit the completed form to the Student Affairs” rather than “The student should complete the form and submit it to the Student Affairs.”

7. FORMATTING GUIDELINES

7.1. Paper size and margin

Use A4 paper with portrait orientation. The left and right margin should be 1 inch (2.54 cms) and top and bottom margin as 1 inch (2.54 cms).

7.2. Font type and size

Use font as specified below

- For main heading use Arial Black all capitals with font size 14
- For paragraph heading use Arial Black normal with font size 12
• For sub-heading within the paragraph use Arial Black normal with font size 10
• For text within the paragraph use Times New Roman normal with font size 14

7.3 Line and paragraph spacing
• For the whole document use the line spacing single
• For main heading use the spacing of 6 points before and 6 points after.
• For paragraph heading use the spacing of 18 points before and 6 points after.
• For sub-heading within the paragraph use the spacing of 12 points before and 6 points after.
• For text within the paragraph use the spacing of 6 points before and 6 points after.

7.4 Page number
Give page number at the bottom of the page on right hand side using the format (Page 1 of 6) with font Times New Roman and font size 10.

7.5 Numbering of Headings and Sub-headings
Use outlined numbering for easy referencing.
(e.g. 1, 2, 3 ........ for first tier; 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 ........ for second tier or 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 ........ for third tier and so on)
ABBREVIATIONS

DA - Designated Authorities
DU - Dhofar University
DVC - Deputy Vice Chancellor
FP - Foundation Program
MOHE - Ministry of Higher Education
OAAA - Oman Academic Accreditation Authority
PMC - Policy Management Committee
PMS - Policy Management System
QA - Quality Assurance
UC - University Council
VC - Vice Chancellor
PROPOSAL
The proposal may originate from any stakeholder(s) within or outside the University. This is submitted by them to the Designated Authorities for further processing.

DESIGNATED AUTHORITIES
The Designated Authorities in DU are Office of VC, Office of DVC, Academic Colleges, FP Unit, Non-Academic Departments and QA Unit. They discuss the proposal and after necessary refinement it is forwarded to QA Unit in the prescribed format.

QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT
QA Unit reviews the Proposed Policy for its technicalities and appropriateness, and decides whether to forward it to the PMC or return it to Designated Authorities for necessary modification.

POLICY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
The PMC ensures that the Proposed Policy is in conformity with DU Mission, Vision, Values Goals and Objectives. If so, it is forwarded to University Council for final approval; otherwise it is returned to QA Unit for necessary modification.

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
The University Council approves the Proposed Policy if it is convinced about its technical and legal aspect; and if it is not, the Proposed Policy is returned to PMC for necessary modification.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
There will be some policies which will require the approval of Board of Trustees. The BOT may approve the policies received from UC or may return them to UC for necessary modification.