



## What is good policy writing?

Policy managers and specialists from 30 institutions across New Zealand and all states and territories of Australia were asked to nominate policies they consider well written and comment on the attributes of good institutional policy writing. In this paper we combine the thoughts and analysis of the policy texts offered by the respondents to our request, in a rich reflection on the challenge of writing good policy for a tertiary institution.

Policy practitioners value clarity, concision, simplicity and accessibility, a well-defined purpose and context, and provision of tools and graphics to support implementation. Yet policies may address complex subjects, and are shaped by multiple stakeholders, communal decision-making and an ever changing environment, which may distort them.

The authors will draw not only on their experience as policy specialists in the higher education sector, but on their (until recently) long-forgotten personal history as postgraduates in linguistics and English literature respectively in presenting this analysis and asking the questions: Can style be separated from substance in these texts? Is there a simple set of rules that policy writers can follow to create policy documents that not only meet their purpose, but are easily understood by all affected parties?

We anticipate that our findings from this survey of the policy writing landscape will provide new reference points for better practice, which will be of value equally to those new to policy writing and experienced policy developers seeking exemplars and tips. In the true spirit of collaboration so highly valued by ATEM, this presentation will add to a body of knowledge that is being generated collectively by policy specialists from a broad range of Australasian institutions.