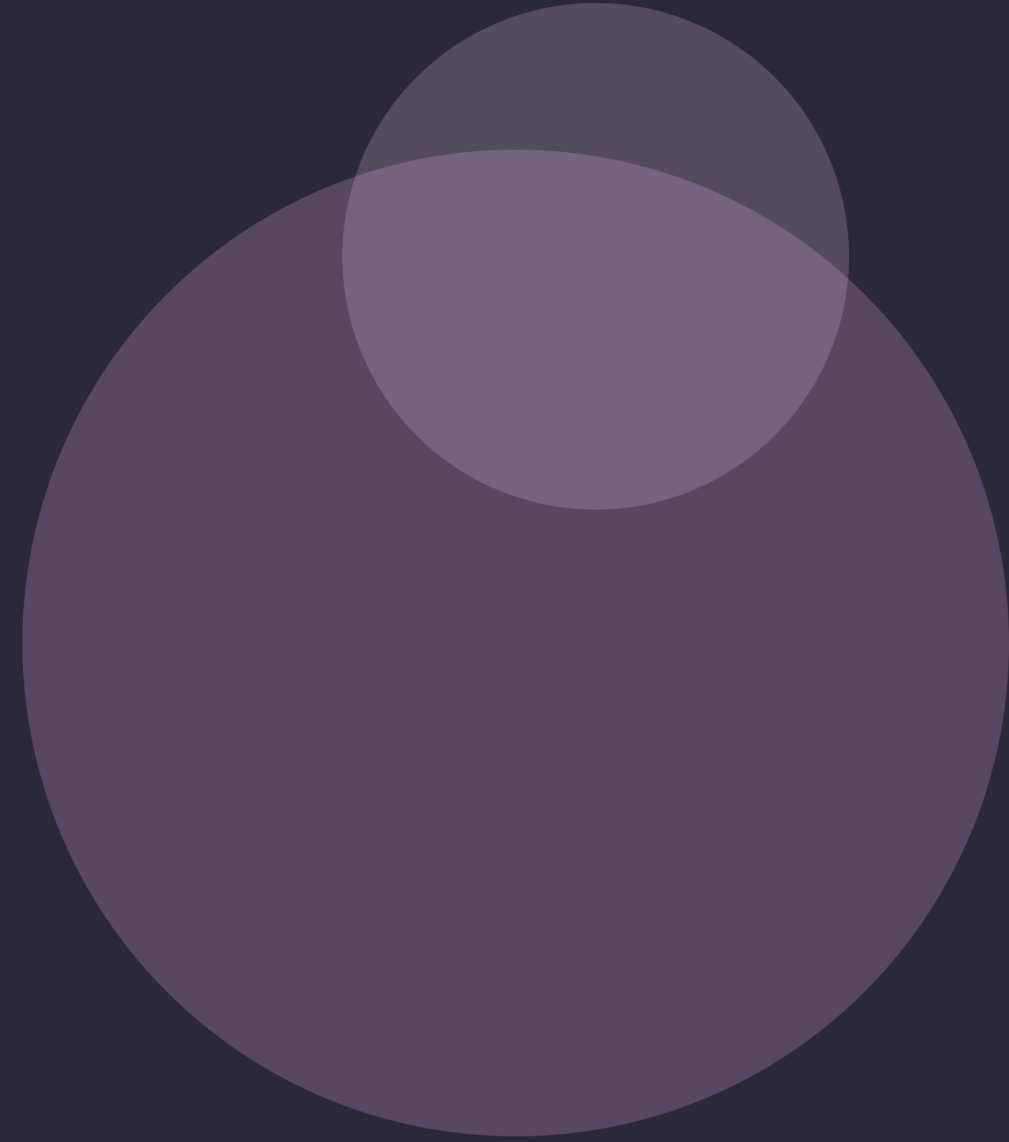


HIGHER EDUCATION COMPLIANCE

Policy People Can Live With

A human-centered approach to developing policy on a university campus

Jaime McNair-Benn



A policy only works if it's doable by the people who live it.

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THE STANDARD

Three tests every policy should pass

TEST 1

Doable

The people it governs can actually follow it, with the time and tools they have.

TEST 2

Seamless

It fits into daily operations instead of sitting on top of them. It isn't overburdensome.

TEST 3

Co-built

People feel more accountable to a policy they helped build.

THE PROBLEM

Why good policies fail

- ⚠ Written for auditors, not for the people doing the work
- ⚠ Hard to find at the moment someone actually needs it
- ⚠ Adds steps without removing any
- ⚠ Drafted without the input of the people, staff, or stakeholders it affects
- ⚠ Never revisited after launch

THE LIFECYCLE

The policy lifecycle, designed around people

01

Discover

Listen first

02

Draft

Write for the
reader

03

Review

Build it
together

04

Launch

Teach the why

05

Live

Watch how
it's used

06

Renew

Revise or retire

 *Renew leads back to Discover. A policy is never finished.*

STAGES 1 AND 2

Discover and draft: start with the people

01 · DISCOVER

Listen before you write

- Map who it affects.
- Interview or shadow a few people from each group
- Find the moment of need: when does someone reach for this policy?
- Look for workarounds. They show where the process breaks.

02 · DRAFT

Write for the reader

- Plain language first; save legal precision for definitions
- Lead with what to do, then explain why
- Count the steps it adds, and look for steps it can remove
- Fit it into forms, systems, and calendars people already use

STAGES 3 AND 4

Review and launch: build it together, then teach it

03 · REVIEW

Build it together

- Bring a small working group into drafting, not just commenting
- Test the draft against real scenarios before it's final
- Route it through shared governance: leadership, staff, and other stakeholders
- Legal review for risk, not for rewriting into legalese

04 · LAUNCH

Teach the why

- Explain the why in one paragraph anyone can repeat
- Offer role-based guides: what this means for you
- Train inside meetings and systems people already attend
- Name a contact for questions

STAGES 5 AND 6

Live and renew: measure, listen, revise

05 · LIVE

Measure

- Questions received
- Exceptions requested
- Violations and near misses

05 · LIVE

Listen

Workarounds and complaints are data about the policy, not just about the people.

06 · RENEW

Renew or retire

Set a review date at launch. Retire policies that no longer serve a purpose.

CASE STUDY

The student travel policy

BEFORE

The policy

Off-campus classes and activities were part of the curriculum. After accidents and injuries, the university added a travel policy and form to limit liability.

THE FRICTION

Where it broke

- Professors chased signatures and fielded complaints
- Students and parents objected to the policy
- Signature fatigue: one more form to sign

AFTER

What changed

- A roundtable with professors, who read it first; their feedback shaped updates
- Complaints go to compliance, not professors
- A digital, automated form

Doable once complaints stopped landing on professors. Seamless once the form went digital. Co-built at the roundtable.

Practice: Redesign a policy students actually use

FICTIONAL POLICY EXCERPT

Section 4.2(b): All requests for the utilization of university facilities by registered student organizations shall be submitted via Form FR-7 no fewer than twenty-one (21) business days prior to the proposed event date, subject to approval by the Office of Facilities, the Dean of Students, and, where applicable, Risk Management, notwithstanding any prior informal authorization.

- 1 Who uses this policy, and when?
- 2 What's their moment of need?
- 3 Rewrite it as three plain-language steps.
- 4 What one step could you remove or combine?

TAKEAWAYS

What to take with you

- 1 Test every policy: is it doable, seamless, and co-built?
- 2 Start with the people who will live it, not with the template.
- 3 Launch with the why, and train where people already are.
- 4 Set a review date on day one.

Thank you

Questions, stories, and conversation welcome.

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