

## Developing Unit-Level Rules: Best Practices

**What is a unit rule?** Unit rules apply to a unit or to the functions over which a unit has authority. Along with procedures, unit rules address needs at the unit level or control issues that affect a subset of the university or its operations. Unit rules are developed and approved by a specific unit and describe that unit's approach to implementing relevant university policies or standards, or describe mechanisms for the administration of programs and unit-specific functions. These rules are applicable only to their home units, or to functions over which that unit has authority, but may involve the implementation of processes that effect the entire university and university community. Unit rules may be more restrictive than university policies and standards, but must accord with them and with relevant statutes and regulations.

### Best Practices for Developing Unit Rules

- 1. Establish a process.** Rather than revising unit rules in an ad hoc manner, consider establishing a process in advance. This doesn't need to be extensive—in fact, too much process can unnecessarily slow your efforts. But, consider establishing a small group tasked with reviewing and drafting rules on a regular basis. Think about how draft rules will be vetted and determine who will approve rule changes. This will provide clarity and consistency to your efforts.
- 2. Empower a leader in your unit.** Make reviewing and updating rules a priority by assigning it as a responsibility to one or more individuals, depending on what makes sense for your unit. This individual can work with leadership to prioritize efforts and manage your rulemaking process.
- 3. Consider a rule's implications and consult early.** While unit rules impact a unit and its function, they can also have broader effects. There may be legal, operational, financial, policy, or other implications. At the early stages of developing or modifying a rule, consult with University Policy Program. Rules may also have implications for other units. If your rule will affect another unit in any meaningful way, that unit should be consulted early and be involved in the rulemaking process. Units, groups, or individuals who will be subject to a rule should also be alerted, and potentially, be involved in the rulemaking process.
- 4. Write rules that are clear and effective.** Writing rules can be daunting. Start by making a standard template to be used for your rules. This often includes sections for policy statements, reasons for the rules, scope or applicability, roles and responsibilities, and links to additional resources and forms. Then, consider what you are seeking to accomplish with the rule and focus your efforts toward that objective. Try to avoid drifting into peripheral areas that are unnecessary. Sometimes less is more. Be direct, specific, and use plain language. Be sure to date your drafts and take steps to maintain version control of both drafts and final rules. The University Policy Program offers additional resources that may be helpful:  
<https://policy.oregonstate.edu/resources>



5. **Finally, a note on nomenclature.** To avoid confusing unit rules with university policies or standards, it is recommended to refer to them as *unit rules*, *rules*, or some other designator, as opposed to *policies* or *standards*. The terms *university policy* and *university standard* should not be used for rules and are only to be used for items that have gone through the formal university policy process and reside in the *University Policy and Standards Manual*.