

Case Study



FAST TRACKING POLICY & PROCEDURE

Introduction

As a reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, many policies and procedures have needed to be rewritten and adapted to reflect new ways of operating. Our case study from 2019 provides real learning points for the rapid development of policy and procedure.

What was the issue?

In a leading UK university, a high profile, highly publicised case of hate crime and online sexual abuse was further compounded by poor application of the disciplinary procedure. This revealed that the existing process for handling such complex and sensitive issues was in need of an urgent review. The current sexual misconduct policy was in need of a radical update in order to reflect up-to-date practice. The Registrar had promised the student body and the community that this would be addressed by the start of the academic year. To achieve this, it was necessary to fast-track the creation of a brand new Policy, Procedure and process.

KEY WORDS:

Policy and Procedure writing
Lean
Rapid writing cell
Higher Education
COVID-19

What were the constraints?

Depending on the nature of the policy, the writing of such a policy could typically take many months to develop. However, the luxury of time was not available as this was already mid-July and the commitment was made to have this ready by September to ratify a complete Policy before term start. How to get many different stakeholders and opinions focused on one outcome - and rapidly?

What methodology/approach was used?

We adopted a facilitated lean approach using what was called a 'rapid writing cell' of 5 days duration, with the involvement of a cross-functional team from across the University including Student representation. The most appropriate attendees were identified, invited and asked to clear their diaries for the following week. Best practice frameworks were referenced; examples of other institutions' Sexual Violence and Misconduct policies were studied and the key recommendations of an independent external review was used to guide the development of an agenda.

What were the results?

Using parallel writing groups and a process of review and rewrite, the first draft of the whole Policy was available for review by the end of the first day. There followed a peer review by another team, which included representatives from a local, external Rape and Sexual Violence Advice Centre. By the end of the fifth day, not only had the Policy been reviewed extensively but a detailed step-by-step Procedure had been written, a future state process map developed, and a student-facing flow chart developed for publication.

There was a period of refinement post-workshop, but essentially the majority of the Sexual Violence Policy and Procedure (with supporting Guidance and workflows), including the Appeals process, been accomplished in one working week.

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