



Ministry of Higher Education  
& Oman Accreditation Council

Training Module 05B v2

# **Good Documentation**

## **Policies, Procedures and Guidelines**

**Workshop Handout**

© Martin Carroll  
Last updated: 16 September 2006



**Training Module Version Control Table**

Version	Author	Date	Summary of Main Changes
1	M Carroll	12-09-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Training Module Handout.</li> </ul>
2	M Carroll	16-09-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added new slides 2, 7, 23 &amp; 24</li> <li>• Minor amendments to slides 4, 13, 20</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	<b>Module Aims .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Intended Participants .....	3
1.2	Learning Outcomes.....	3
<b>2</b>	<b>Module Slides.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1	Summary of the Presentation.....	3
2.2	Workshop Activity.....	6
<b>3</b>	<b>Additional Materials.....</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1	Further Resources on Communication Theory.....	9
3.2	Further Resources on Writing Policies .....	9
3.3	Further Resources on Flow Charting .....	10
3.4	Further Resources on Version Control.....	10
3.5	Discussion Board Details .....	10

This Training Module is part of the Training Program open to staff of public and private higher education institutions, the Oman Accreditation Council, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Manpower. The Training Program is a joint initiative of the Directorate General, Private Universities and Colleges and the Oman Accreditation Council. It aims to raise the capacity and capability of the higher education sector in issues and practices related to assuring and improving quality.

## 1 MODULE AIMS

### 1.1 *Intended Participants*

This Training Module is for any staff of higher education providers involved in writing, approving, disseminating, monitoring and reviewing documents such as policies and manuals.

### 1.2 *Learning Outcomes*



Documents are an essential tool in higher education and higher education management. By the end of this module, participants should:

- Appreciate the importance of good documentation;
- Understand how documents fit into an overall system;
- Understand the difference between documenting policies, procedural manuals and guidelines;
- Be able to design good policy, procedure and guidelines documents based on key elements;
- Understand the principles of version control; and
- Be able to design effective and efficient document dissemination systems.

## 2 MODULE SLIDES

### 2.1 *Summary of the Presentation*

Note that a version designed for use in presentations is available online and free of charge ([www.oac.gov.om/enhancement/training](http://www.oac.gov.om/enhancement/training)). It contains slides that are not included in this printed version (such as model answers to the workshop questions).

 <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold; color: green;">Good Documentation</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold; color: red;">Policies, Procedures and Guidelines</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; color: green;">© 2006 Martin Carroll Training Module 05B (v1) A Ministry of Higher Education &amp; Oman Accreditation Council joint initiative</p> 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: red; font-size: 1.2em;">Module Objectives</p> <p>By the end of this module, participants should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate the importance of good documentation.</li> <li>• Understand how documents fit into an overall system.</li> <li>• Understand the difference between documenting policies, procedural manuals and guidelines.</li> <li>• Be able to design good policy, procedure and guidelines documents based on key elements.</li> <li>• Understand the principles of version control.</li> <li>• Be able to design effective and efficient document dissemination systems.</li> </ul>
---	---

Slide 1

Slide 2

### Session Outline

- Why are Documents Important?
- Types of Documents
- Communication Theory
- Stages in Document Development
- Elements of Good Policies and Policy Development Checklist
- Elements of Good Procedural Manuals
- Elements of Good Guidelines
- Version Control and Dissemination
- Workshops

Slide 3

### Why is Documentation Important?

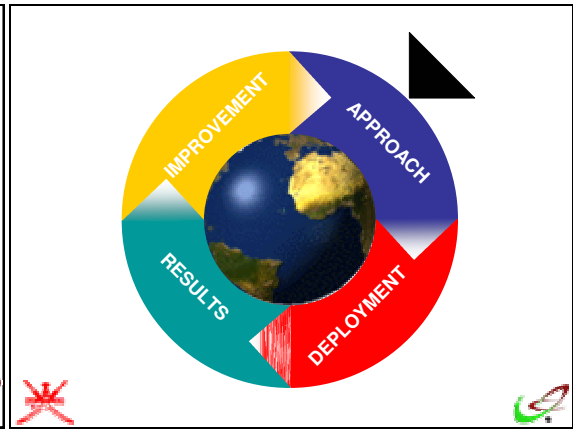
- Documents increase in importance as our organisations become larger and more complex.
- Enables important messages to be communicated clearly and accurately.
- Enables messages to be communicated to a large and dispersed audience.
- Enables important messages to be communicated consistently (i.e. ensures messages don't mutate over time and distance).
- Provides an evidentiary trail.

Slide 4

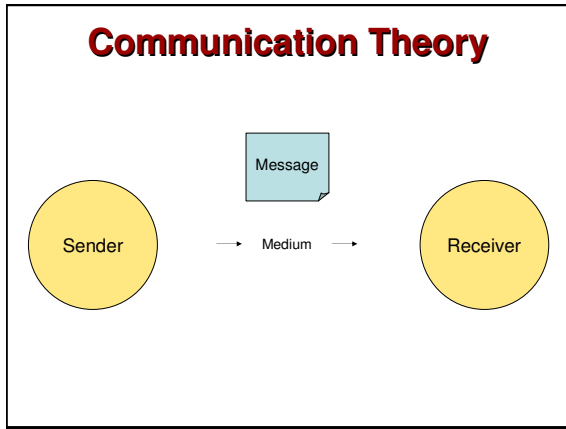
### Types of Documentation

- There are many types of important documents. Three are addressed in this Training Module.
- Policies tell us *what* ought to be done. They take many forms, such as bylaws, decrees, rules, etc.
- Procedural manuals tell *how* things ought to be done. They provide step by step instructions on how to implement (deploy) a process.
- Guidelines provide *ideas and options* on how things could be done. They are not strict rules.
- All are essential components of the "Approach" (in ADRI)

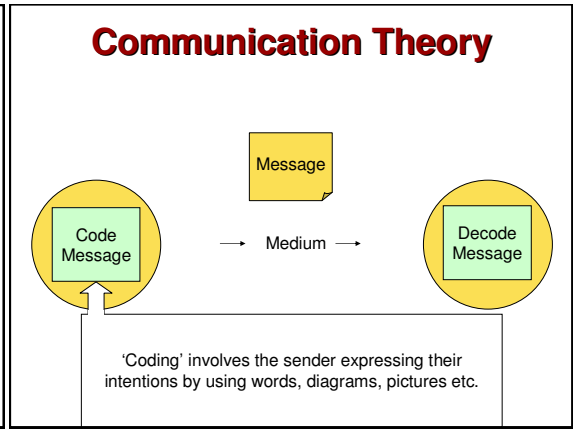
Slide 5



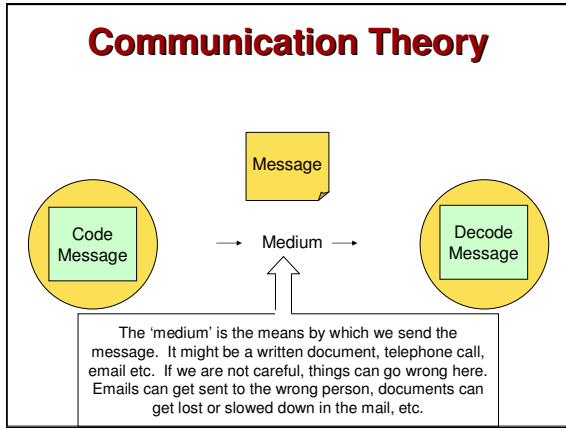
Slide 6



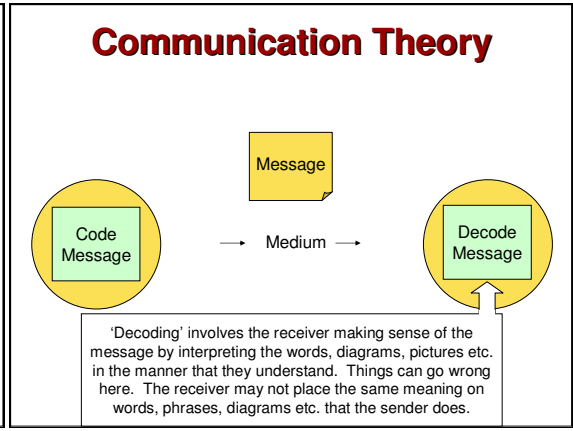
Slide 7



Slide 8



Slide 9



Slide 10

## Communication Theory

People absorb information differently:

- Some are better at certain languages than others;
- Some are good at reading text;
- Some are good at interpreting visual images;
- Some are good at listening;
- Some are good at discussing; and
- Some learn best from hands-on experience.



Slide 11

## Communication Theory

Documents are most effective when:

- They meet an agreed need;
- There has been proper consultation with stakeholders during the drafting stages;
- They incorporate a mix of media;
- They are written as simply as possible – but no simpler;
- They are disseminated consistently and are readily accessible; and
- They are backed up with training and seminars.



Slide 12

## Document Development Stages

1. Identify the need.
2. Benchmark solutions.
3. Draft document. Use the appropriate tools.
4. Consult with stakeholders. Make it real!
5. Revise the draft (and get it proof-read or edited).
6. Get the document Approved.
7. Disseminate the document effectively.
8. Monitor the effectiveness of the document.
9. Review and revise the document periodically

Slide 13

## Elements of Good Policies

1. Policy name (e.g. Moderation Policy)
2. Policy group (e.g. Academic Policy Group)
3. Status (e.g. public or confidential)
4. Purpose (why is this policy required?)
5. Scope of application (to whom does this policy apply?)
6. Definitions (of any jargon or acronyms used in the policy)
7. Policy content (incl. guidelines & means for monitoring effectiveness)
8. Penalties (what will happen if the policies are not followed?)
9. References
10. Appendices (e.g. tables, lists, forms)
11. Approval authority (who has the power to approve the policy?)
12. Dates versions approved + date this version takes effect
13. Date scheduled for review
14. Contact person (for people seeking further information about the policy)

Slide 14

## Policy Development Checklist (1)

- What is the problem (or opportunity) that requires this policy?
- For every problem there are 100 possible solutions. How do we know we are proposing the best one for our HEP here in Oman?
- Who will benefit from this policy? How?
- What are the risks associated with this policy? How are we managing them?

Slide 15

## Policy Development Checklist (2)

- What additional work (in time and money) will be required by our staff to implement this policy?
- What additional work (in time and money) will be required by students (or other concerned stakeholders) to comply with this policy?
- Is it worth it?

Slide 16

## Elements of Good Procedures

1. Procedural manual name (e.g. Filing System Manual)
2. Table of contents and pagination (especially for large documents)
3. Purpose (why is this manual required?)
4. Scope of application (who is this manual for?)
5. Definitions (of any jargon or acronyms used in the manual)
6. Procedures (may include text, flowcharts, screenshots etc.)
7. Penalties (what will happen if the procedure is not followed?)
8. References (e.g. related policies)
9. Appendices (e.g. associated forms or tables)
10. Approval authority (who has the power to approve the manual?)
11. Dates versions approved + date this version takes effect
12. Date scheduled for review
13. Contact person (for people seeking further information on the procedure)

Slide 17

## Elements of Good Guidelines

1. Guidelines name (e.g. Guidelines for Good Teaching)
2. Table of contents and pagination (especially for large documents)
3. Purpose (why is this manual required?)
4. Scope of application (who are these guidelines manual for?)
5. Definitions (of any jargon or acronyms used in these guidelines)
6. Variety of Guidelines (may include text, flowcharts, screenshots etc.)
7. References (e.g. related policies)
8. Appendices (e.g. associated forms or tables)
9. Approval authority (who has the power to approve the guidelines?)
10. Date each version approved (date version takes effect is not required)
11. Date scheduled for review
12. Contact person (for people seeking further information on the guidelines)

Slide 18

### Version Control

- Documents change over time.
- Each time a new *final* version is approved it should have a new version number (v1, v2, v3 etc.)
- Each time a new *draft* version is circulated it should have a new version decimal number (v1.1, v1.2 etc.)
- All versions, draft or final, should be *dated!*
- File names and dates should be on *every* page (e.g. in the footer).
- Pages should be paginated (using "Page X of Y")

Slide 19

Version	Author	Date	Summary of Changes
0.1	JBE	01-06-2005	First draft
0.2	JBE	15-06-2005	Added definitions Revised Section 3.4
1.0	JBE	13-07-2005	Changed contact person Added approval date and date of effect
1.1	MR	4-05-2006	Removed section relating to late enrolments (now in separate policy)
2.0	MR	29-05-2006	Added new approval date and date of effect

Example of a version control table. Located at the front of a manual.

Slide 20

### Document Dissemination

- A version has not really been updated until it has been disseminated. Use multiple methods of dissemination, but make sure all versions are the same.
- For "controlled" documents, you could keep a list of recipients.
- Whatever method of dissemination you use, there must always be a "master copy" which is the official, legally-binding version. To be binding, it must be accessible. The web or an intranet is a good way to do this.
- Master copies should be "write-protected" by password.
- A document has not really been disseminated until you have had confirmation/feedback.

Slide 21

Recipient	V1 Approved 29-05-2005	V2 Approved 14-06-2006	V3
Mohammed	01-06-2005 Sent by mail	15-06-2006 Sent by mail	
Fatma	01-06-2005 Sent by mail	Not yet sent	
Jokha	01-06-2005 Sent by mail	15-06-2006 Sent by mail	
Dr Thomas	01-06-2005 Hand delivered	15-06-2006 Sent by mail	
Dr Khalid	01-06-2005 Sent by mail	17-06-2006 Hand delivered	
Dr Alia	01-06-2005 Sent by mail	15-06-2006 Sent by mail	

Example of a dissemination table for controlled documents. Held by Contact Person.

Slide 22

### QM Communication Theory

From a quality management perspective, communication has not effectively occurred until there is a closed feedback loop.

Slide 23

### Closing Thoughts

- Oman has a strong tradition of verbal communication.
- Documents should never fully replace the importance of positive human contact.
- But, used well, they can provide excellent support for human interactions.

Slide 24

## 2.2 Workshop Activity

The following slides outline the workshop activity. For further information on the workshop, see the online PowerPoint presentation for this Training Module (<http://www.oac.gov.om/enhancement/training/05B/>).



# Workshop Activity

## Instructions

1. Form into groups.
2. Discuss the questions assigned to your group.
3. One person will record the group's responses.
4. One person will report back to the full workshop.
5. There are 25 minutes for this activity and 25 minutes for the feedback session

Group 1  
Questions

Group 2  
Questions

Group 3  
Questions

Group 4  
Questions



# Workshop Activity

## Questions for Group 1

1. What other types of documents should be prepared in a systematic way? Why?
2. Under what circumstances should a document be confidential?
3. Should 'Teaching' be set out in a Procedural Manual or in Guidelines? Why?
4. What methods of disseminating documents have worked for you? What haven't? Why not?



## Workshop Activity

### Questions for Group 2

1. What are the advantages of consultation?  
What are the disadvantages?
2. Under what circumstances is Benchmarking unnecessary or inappropriate?
3. Other than text, what are some ways of communicating messages in a document?  
What are the disadvantages of using them?
4. Is there anything at your HEP that does not need a policy, procedural manual or guidelines? Why not?



## Workshop Activity

### Questions for Group 3

1. About how often should policies and manuals be updated? Why?
2. Why might policy documents and procedural manuals not have the desired effect?
3. What are three advantages and three disadvantages of relying only on the web as a means of communicating policies?
4. At your workplace, about how many of your processes are fully documented in manuals?



## Workshop Activity

### Questions for Group 4

1. What are some of the reasons for listing the Contact Person in the document?
2. Why can't policies and procedures be put in the same document?
3. Why bother having Guidelines if we don't enforce them?
4. What is an example, in your experience, of a message being coded and decoded differently? How could it be avoided?

### 3 ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

These additional references are supplied for general educative purposes only. Their inclusion here does not imply any endorsement or warranty by the authors of this training module.

Note that web references provided below may not remain active for long! If you want to check them out, it is better to do so quickly!

#### 3.1 *Further Resources on Communication Theory*

- Wikipedia, a community-authored online encyclopedia, is often a useful course of information on topics. They have a simple but helpful entry on communication theory: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication_theory)
- Communication theory dates back to Aristotle and is probably one of the world's largest and most expansive fields of study. A substantial collection of theoretical information for advanced scholars can be found at [http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc/comm\\_theory.html](http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc/comm_theory.html).

#### 3.2 *Further Resources on Writing Policies*

- For an online example of a university policy database, which uses standard templates for policies, see Victoria University of Wellington at [http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/policy.html](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/policy.html).

- The University of California Santa Cruz has placed a draft of its “Guide to Writing Policy and Procedure Documents” online for free viewing at <http://www.ucsc.edu/ppmanual/pdf/guide.pdf>.
- The Information Services and Technology division at MIT, one of the world’s great universities, has placed its procedure for “Writing Policies, Rules and Guidelines” online for free viewing at <http://web.mit.edu/is/topics/policies/guidelines.html>.
- There are formal university courses on this matter, such as “Writing Policies and Procedures” at the University Denver’s Centre for Education: <http://ce.com/education/Writing-Policies-and-Procedures-10087618.htm>.
- There is a huge wealth of information on this topic available over the Internet. To do an effective Google or Yahoo search, try an advanced search with all of the words: “writing policies”

### **3.3 Further Resources on Flow Charting**

- Many procedural manuals use flowcharting as a way of mapping out processes. Most standard software applications have a basic flowcharting component built into them (such as MS PowerPoint, and MS Word). However, if you want to do higher quality flowcharting there are several specialized software applications, such as Microsoft Visio, ABC, EDraw and SmartDraw.
- There is an online tutorial for flowcharting which, for now, is free of charge at <http://home.att.net/~dexter.a.hansen/flowchart/flowchart.htm>.

### **3.4 Further Resources on Version Control**

- The International Standards Organisation (ISO) requires effective version control for its certification. They provide guidance on version control in their standards on information security management (ISO 17799:2005). For more information see <http://www.iso-17799.com/index.htm>.
- Many universities use detailed “document history and version control guidelines”. For one example, see Charles Sturt University (Australia) at <http://www.csu.edu.au/division/healsafe/textdocs/guides/document.doc>.
- There is software that can assist with version control, such as Visual SourceSafe: [http://msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/library/en-us/dnvss/html/msdn\\_isovss.asp](http://msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/library/en-us/dnvss/html/msdn_isovss.asp).
- Again, there is a huge wealth of information on this topic available over the Internet – including many practical examples. To do an effective Google or Yahoo search, try an advanced search with all of the words: “version control guidelines”

### **3.5 Discussion Board Details**

The online discussion board for this Training Module is not yet operational.