



ITS Policy Bulletin

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*Informing the UNC Chapel Hill community
about changes to technology policies.*

Policy Equity Remediation Project

The ITS Policy Office is nearing completion of the [Policy Equity Remediation Project](#). The University [Office of Ethics and Policy equity audit](#) inspired this project. Main equity issues with policy documents were:

- readability (how easy is it to understand?),
- jargon (technical language only “insiders” know),
- barrier language (language that is unwelcoming to people based on identity), and
- negative statements (directing what not to do instead of what to do),
- accessibility features aren’t used well or at all,
- many policies aren’t in the template format.

So first, for the IT policies we make sure that they follow the template. Predictable structure makes it easy to find what you need in a policy. Consistent look-and-feel is the best place to start.

Next we addressed readability.

This mostly meant “reading level.” The audit found an average reading level of grade 15.7 for policy documents at UNC. For ITS policies the average was 17.2, which was the third highest at UNC. In this case “third place” is a bad thing. This is an equity issue because the average reading level for adults in the United States is between 7th and 8th grade. We often forget that even though this is a University, not everyone in our community reads English at a college graduate level. Bringing policies closer to an 8th grade level means that more people can read the policies they must follow.

Sentence length came down and jargon, barrier language, and negative statements came out as we wrote for readability. The audit found that 79% of ITS policies had jargon, 10% had barrier language, and 52% had negative statements (or lacked sufficient positive statements?).

Additionally, the audit found that some ITS policies had digital accessibility issues. Providing links for references is important, and we corrected a lot of those. Many policies referenced other policies, articles, pages, departments, or organizations. Most of them did not provide a hyperlink or directions about how to find that information. In some cases we needed to provide definitions of technical terms if we couldn’t replace them with common words. ITS was allowed a little latitude for jargon. It would be difficult to write on some IT topics with no jargon! But we could only keep it if we defined the terms well enough.

This project has been ongoing for ten months now. Review is a multi-step process. One reviser edits the document with consistent checks on the reading level along the way. They then submit it for review from other contributors. Published versions of are available on the [University’s policy website](#).

We are pleased to report that we have only four more policies for review. We are committed to making ITS policies accessible, equitable, and understandable to everyone at Carolina. You can go to the [IT Policy Equity Project webpage](#) to see policy document updates in progress. A form at the bottom of the page will take any feedback you choose to offer. If you have interest in policy equity or remediation, please reach out to its_policy@unc.edu.

Policy Highlight

Acceptable Use Policy

ITS would like to highlight the [Acceptable Use Policy](#), which is currently in its equity review. It is widely read, and we appreciate any feedback. The Acceptable Use Policy outlines expectations of users of University Information Technology:

- behaving responsibly and respectfully with the [University's mission](#) in mind,
- respecting the integrity and security of University IT and data,
- showing thoughtfulness for other University users,
- not impeding the ability of others to use University IT,
- consuming shared resources carefully,
- respecting the rights and property of others', and
- cooperating with investigations of potential unauthorized or illegal use of University IT.
- Users may not attempt to intercept, interfere, or track another user's communications. This includes cyberstalking and any violation of the privacy of others' computer data.

Feedback

The ITS Policy Office continually reviews and updates IT Policies, Standards, and Procedures to best serve the University's IT, Privacy, and Digital Accessibility needs. We are always interested in feedback on new and existing policy documents. All feedback received by the office is saved and included in annual review processes. If you have comments to offer on this bulletin, on policies managed by ITS, or if you have questions about any ITS policy or would like to have an expert speak to any campus group on IT policy issues, please feel free to contact Kim Stahl directly, at the ITS Policy Office email, its_policy@unc.edu, via ServiceNow (ITS Police Office Assignment Group), or submit a comment using the form on the [ITS Policy Review Page](#).