NIU Libraries’ Policy Recommendations

Background

In the spring of 2021, the Libraries’ Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Committee (LEDI) formed a Policy Review Task Force to review library policy in order to help ensure that the Libraries’ services and resources are accessible to and inclusive of all users. The task force identified general policy recommendations in addition to creating a rubric to review existing policies. The general recommendations below were identified as ways to make the policies more accessible, inclusive, and equitable. These recommendations are made for policies governing services and resources and do not pertain to collection development policies.

# Policy Review

The task force recommends that NIU Libraries’ policies be reviewed on a formal schedule, every three years, congruent with the [Policy on Managing University Policies,](https://www.niu.edu/policies/policy/index.shtml) or as appropriate. Coordinated by the Associate Deans, the policies should be reviewed and, if necessary, updated by the person(s) and/or units most closely associated with that service or resource. The review should check for relevancy, accuracy, and broken links. Every time a policy is changed, the date of that change should be noted on the policy as per the [University Policy Writing Template](https://www.niu.edu/policies/submit/template.shtml). We recommend that policies only be created if absolutely necessary, as too many policies inhibit clarity and can create roadblocks that diminish equity and accessibility. When a policy exists in the [NIU Policy Library](https://www.niu.edu/policies/index.shtml), the library should defer to that policy and direct users to it rather than creating a duplicate policy at the library level.

Old versions of policies and retired policies should be archived with University Archives format preference of PDF.

# Format and Style

Flat PDFs (without a text layer) are inaccessible. Therefore, the task force recommends that the policies be transitioned to dynamic text on webpages following the [University Policy Writing Template](https://www.niu.edu/policies/submit/template.shtml). This will allow for screen readers to navigate the policies more easily and will assist in other ways, such as searching across the website for particular text.

Additionally, policies should avoid jargon and initialism/acronyms, and they should be written at an 8th grade reading level[[1]](#endnote-1).

Policies should list responsible positions rather than specific people, as the people in positions may change.

# Guidelines for Creating New Policies

* Where possible, Library policies should defer to NIU policies. If an NIU policy exists that covers the need, there is no need for a library policy.
* Policies should not be made in response to a one-time event.
* Policies should not be made with a primary purpose of creating penalty.
* Policies should be directed to ALMA patron groups (undergraduate, graduates, faculty, staff, alumni, community) and should not be directed at other groups (e.g., children, persons with children, undocumented students).
* Policies should be created only in response to newly-developed or revised services or resources; such policies should describe the services/resources and affected groups.
* Policies should be shared in a way that allows for members of the university community to provide feedback.

# Penalties

Policies should outline the appropriate redress for policy deviation and infraction. However, those penalties should be only enough to correct the harm caused and not be framed as punishment.

Employees should be aware that the relationship between patrons and law enforcement can be complex, and where the library can resolve its own issues, it should. Police should only be a resource sought in cases of danger to employees, patrons, or any other people.

Non-police resources might be more appropriate for some situations:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Counseling and Consultation Services | Campus Life Building, room 200 | 815-753-1206 |
| Contact NIU Health Services | 385 Wirtz Drive | 815-753-1311 |
| Center for Student Assistance | Campus Life Building, room 150 | 815-753-8300 |
| Student Conduct | conduct@niu.edu | 815-753-1571 |

# Exceptions and Special Circumstances

In situations where exceptions are made, these exceptions should follow principles, policies, and procedures with input from multiple members of the relevant department. Additionally, these exceptions should be documented to influence the updating of policies in order to accommodate those justified exceptions in the future.

Where possible, employees should attempt to delay the decision to grant or decline an exception until consultation with other library members is possible. The act of a single individual making a single decision of exception to policy should be avoided.

1. Microsoft Support offers advice about how to run on and check the reading level in Word documents. Note that reading statistics only show up after having accepted/rejected/ignored all Editor suggestions. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)