

Policy Review and Enhancement



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1.0 BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

UCD Academic Policy Development Model

The agenda for policy development currently emerges from needs identified by either academic committees or individuals. A programme of policy development is generally agreed each year by the Registrar, which may be supplemented during the year as required in line with strategic or related developments. It is important that this activity is aligned to the recently approved academic governance structure, to become the responsibility of the Academic Council Executive Committee under its new remit and terms of reference.

The necessity for policy review has been acknowledged through the University's policy formulation model, with some policy documents specifying timeframes for review, (see Appendix 1). However, to-date policy review has not been systematic and has occurred on an *ad hoc* basis, usually arising from implementation issues requiring immediate attention. Such reviews have resulted in policy documents being amended with additional or clarifying language to support understanding and assist implementation. This discussion document sets out the rationale for a co-ordinated, comprehensive approach to policy review and enhancement and proposes review model for further discussion.

2.0 PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

It is essential that once established policies are reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain 'fit for purpose'. Policies must remain relevant to and consistent with the University's strategic direction. Policy Review will also provide a mechanism whereby policies may be updated to reflect relevant external factors such as changes in the Higher Education environment and government policy or legislation.

The objectives of a Policy Review Framework are:

- to define a standardised approach and methodology for the review and enhancement of academic policy to promote quality and consistency of approach.
- to identify roles and responsibilities with respect to the review and enhancement of academic policies.

3.0 PROPOSED APPROACH TO POLICY REVIEW

3.1 Academic Governance and Policy Review

- It is recommended that policy review should be embedded within the University's newly established academic committee structure and become the specific responsibility of the Academic Council Executive Committee.
- A policy review schedule should be established annually in consultation with the Registrar, UUPB and UGPB and other relevant Academic Council Committees.
- The policy review schedule should be drafted by Academic Secretariat in consultation with the Registrar and approved by the relevant academic committee at the first meeting of each academic session.

3.2 Staged Approach to Policy Review (see Appendix 2)

The review model presented proposes a staged process in recognition that some policies may require minor amendment, to support implementation, during the initial stage of operation and draws the distinction between this activity and major policy review.

Stage 1 Policy Review

It is possible that during the first year of operation a small number of minor amendments may be required to address unforeseen implementation issues raised by policy implementers and users. It is suggested that Academic Secretariat will maintain a record of any such issues that arise during the dissemination process or during the early stages of implementation and where necessary seek inputs from relevant stakeholders to formulate amendments. Agreed amendments should be proposed to Academic Council or delegated committee for approval.

Stage 2 Policy Review

It is proposed that a formal review cycle is adopted for all of the University's academic policies. This may vary depending on the type of policy and its scope; however it is recommended that policies are reviewed following three years of operation. It is further recommended that all policies must be reviewed after five years from adoption to ensure that all policies undergo appropriate reassessment.

3.3 Who Reviews?

Policy Review Panel

A panel of academic staff should be established to form 'Policy Review Groups'. Members of the panel would be drawn from Vice-Principals for Teaching and Learning, Graduate School Directors, Heads of School, Programme Deans, School Heads for Teaching and Learning.

Policy Review Group

- A Policy Review Group should be established to review each policy or a number of related policies as appropriate;
- The membership of each Policy Review Working Group should be agreed by the Registrar in consultation with Academic Secretariat;
- Review Groups should seek inputs from policy implementers and users;
- Each Policy Review Group should propose specific revisions to policies as deemed appropriate;
- Policy Review Groups may also recommend the development of additional guidance material to support policy implementation;
- When undertaking major policy reviews a Policy Review Group may co-opt additional members for their specific expertise, e.g. representation from Quality or the Office of Corporate and Legal Affairs.

3.4 Policy Review Activities and Tools

The evaluation of a policy should include consideration of the following:

- Benchmarking against current best practice, paying particular attention to institutions of *Universitas 21*;
- Assess whether the policy remains consistent with University strategic objectives, and where relevant reflect any changes in or development of national guidelines, codes of practice, policy and legislation;
- Whether the policy meets stakeholders' needs;
- Constraints on implementing the policy at local levels of the University,
- The level of compliance with the existing policy;
- Whether the university's regulations support the policy;
- Whether the policy works well at an operational level – do the related procedures require revision?
- Whether any related policies/regulations need to be revised or rescinded.

A variety of policy review tools may be utilised by the Policy Review Group to assist in policy audit and evaluations:

- Log of policy issues identified by/to Academic Secretariat
- Consultation questionnaires/workshops aimed at policy users and implementers
- Policy compliance audit
- Documented "hard" cases
- External advisors, peer review

3.5 Outcomes

The envisaged outcomes of policy review include:

- Identification of substantial or significant changes to the policy
- Identification of minor amendments
- Confirmation that the policy has remained relevant and requires no amendment
- Identification of a requirement for additional support documentation e.g. guidelines, procedures
- Recommendation to broaden the scope of the policy

4.0 Role of Academic Secretariat

Academic Secretariat:

- is responsible for monitoring policy implementation and ensuring that policies are reviewed in accordance with the agreed policy review schedule;
- will keep a record of policy issues to help inform policy review;
- will co-ordinate and support policy review activity, including support to Policy Review Groups;
- will maintain the Policy Review Panel;
- will provide relevant materials and appropriate information relating to the existing policy and its implementation through the appropriate Policy Officer;
- is responsible for ensuring that the Policy Review Group recommendations are progressed through University academic committees, as appropriate, towards approval by Academic Council;
- is responsible for ensuring that information regarding revised policies is communicated to all relevant stakeholders appropriately.

5.0 Review of quasi-academic and non-academic policies

The University has a number of quasi-academic and non-academic policies. Some of these have been in existence for a considerable period of time and were predominantly developed outside of the academic policy development model. It is suggested that review is essential. It is proposed that reviews could be conducted using the model outlined above under the governance of Academic Council. It is suggested that the review of such policies would be supported by the relevant committees of Academic Council, e.g. Student conduct policies by the Academic Council Committee on Discipline (ACCD); student experience policies by the Academic Council Committee for Campus Life (ACCCL); research policies by University Research Strategy Board (URSB) and quality policies by the Academic Council Committee on Quality (ACCQ) etc.

It is acknowledged that a non-academic policy review model is likely to require adaption and will require alignment to any local requirements and established processes, procedures and standards. However, in compliance with the University's principles of governance it is suggested that all reviews should be brought to Academic Council for approval providing such policies with the necessary statutory force.

Examples of quasi-academic and non-academic policies include but are not limited to the following:

- Student related policies: Student Code; Student Email Policy; UCD Alcohol Policy
- Research policies: Intellectual Property Policy; Ethics Policy
- QA Policies:
- HR policies: Appointment of Adjunct and Visiting Staff

Appendix 1: Approved /Pending Policies and Stated Review Dates

<i>Policy Title</i>	<i>Policy approved</i>	<i>Specified Review date</i>
Accreditation of Prior Learning: Certified Learning	13 April 2006	Not specified
Accreditation of Prior Learning: Experiential Learning	26 April 2007	2009
Appointment of Adjunct Staff	1 st December 2005	Not specified
Appointment of Visiting Staff	1 st December 2005	Not specified
Compensation, Progression, Repeating Modules and Re-sit Assessments	29 January 2007	Not specified
Corporate Involvement in Educational Activities	5 October 2006	Not specified
Extenuating Circumstances	13 April 2005	Not specified
Extern Examination at UCD	14 May 2008	Not specified
Late Submission of Coursework	13 October 2005	Not specified
Leave of Absence, Extension and Withdrawal for Graduate Research Degrees	17 April 2008	January 2010
PhD Stage 1 Transfer Assessment	12 April 2007	January 2008
Plagiarism and Academic Integrity	13 October 2005	Not specified
Provision of Electives	12 April 2007	Not specified
Split-site Arrangements for PhD and other Graduate Research Students	6 June 2007	Every 3 years (first review date: 2010)
Student Complaint Policy	6 December 2006	2008
Transfer Applicants / Applicants with Previous Third Level Attendance	4 October 2007	Not specified
Work Placement / Practice Experience Guidelines and Good Practice	12 April 2007	Not specified
Leave of Absence, Extension and Withdrawal for Undergraduate Degrees	In preparation	-
PhD Submission and Examination	In preparation	-
Repeats, Re-sits and Condonation	December 2008 (Part 1)	-
Fitness to Practice	Scheduled for 2009/10	-
Policy on accreditation of co-curricular activity	In preparation	-

<i>Codes of Practice</i>	<i>approved</i>	<i>Specified Review date</i>
Code of Practice for Supervisors and Doctoral	12 April 2007	Every 3 years (first review date: 2010)
Conflict Resolution for Supervisors and Research Students	6 June 2007	Not specified

Appendix 2: Policy Review Model

