

## Example of policy consultation – *Fitness to Continue in Study Policy and Procedures*

Consulted groups and format of consultation:

Group/Individual	Details
<b>Working Group</b>	A dedicated working group was established to develop the Policy. The Working Group met three times and also submitted feedback electronically on drafts of the policy as they were developed. It was constituted by the Chair of the relevant committee of Academic Council, three additional members of that committee, and representatives of Access and Lifelong Learning, Programme Office Directors, the School of Psychology, the Students' Union, and UCD Legal.
<b>Frontline Staff</b>	The Chair of the relevant committee of Academic Council met with representatives of frontline staff to explain the objectives of the policy review and to ask them about their views and concerns regarding the development of the policy, and to request sample cases from each area where such a policy might have an effect in the future.
<b>Workshop of Stakeholders</b>	<p>Circa 60 students, staff, and faculty attended a workshop to discuss a draft of the policy. The workshop took place in an Assisted Learning Environment (ALE) room, and adopted the world café method to structure discussion. Prior to the workshop, three documents were circulated: 1) a decision guide which positioned the draft Fitness to Continue in Study Policy in relation to other University policies to provide advice on which policy should be used in different circumstances, 2) a draft flowchart illustrating the steps in each policy process, and 3) a draft of the policy document. Attendees were assigned to tables of about 10 people to ensure a mix of colleges and roles were represented at each table.</p> <p>The workshop involved two sessions. The draft policy had three levels of activity, and the first session considered the policy at each level. Two tables were asked to consider each level of the policy, so tables 1-2 considered level 1, tables 3-4 considered level 2, and tables 5-6 considered level 3. Each table was asked 'Does the Policy Work', and to focus on the level assigned to them, and to highlight any benefits or concerns they identified. During the second session, random sample student cases were assigned to each table and tables were asked to see if they could navigate the sample case through the policy landscape presented to them. For example, could they identify the most suitable policy for a given case? And where the Fitness to Continue in Study Policy was the appropriate policy, was there agreement in how to implement the procedures provided?</p>

	Finally, participants were invited to submit any points they did not have an opportunity to make during the workshop on Post It notes as they left, or to submit feedback after the workshop.
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### How was feedback processed and incorporated in draft policy?

The **Working Group** considered a template for such policies and sample policies from other higher education institutions. For each section of the policy, the Working Group deliberated on which approach from the samples available was most appropriate for UCD, and where novel approaches might be appropriate. This formed the basis for early drafts of the policy. The Working Group was reconvened to make decisions on subsequent drafts.

**Frontline Staff** (programme office staff and student advisers) were asked to provide feedback, based on their own experience, of the type of issues that such a policy would need to address. For example they were asked how such issues come to their attention, what mechanisms were already in place to address such issues, whether there were concerns particular to their area which they wished to flag, and to provide some anonymised sample cases. This information was used to inform the policy drafting process, to make sure that the policy supported existing good practice, and that it addressed the gaps identified by those staff most directly involved.

Feedback from **Workshop of Stakeholders** resulted in several changes. These included the policy title being changed, the addition of objectives to the purpose section of the policy, the identification of terms which were not widely understood and the consequent addition of definitions for these terms, the addition of content specifically addressing student residences, more detailed procedures for composing panels required by the policy and for informing certain offices and officials about decisions taken under the policy, and the deletion of ambiguous wording.

### What would you do differently/ Any lessons learnt?

The lessons learnt from this exercise is that a good working relationship between the Chair of the sponsoring committee of Academic Council and the person/team supporting the policy development process is key. The Chair and the team met regularly to address issues raised and to agree next steps.

It is also important not to underestimate the time required for each step of the process. It takes time to organise workshops, and when seeking feedback it is important to provide people with workable timelines which avoid their most busy periods. The Working Group held its first meeting in November, submitted a complete draft of the policy to its sponsoring committee the following February, which resulted in a final recommendation being made to Academic Council in April. However, this required several very tight turnarounds, so a longer lead in time would have been better.