University of Galway - Document Hierarchy

Document Hierarchy

National and European Legislation

University Charter and Higher Education Legislation

Statutes

Regulations

University Polices & Codes of Conduct

Procedures/Guidelines/Protocols

Local Documents at College/School/Unit level (College/School/Service Area/ Research Institute)
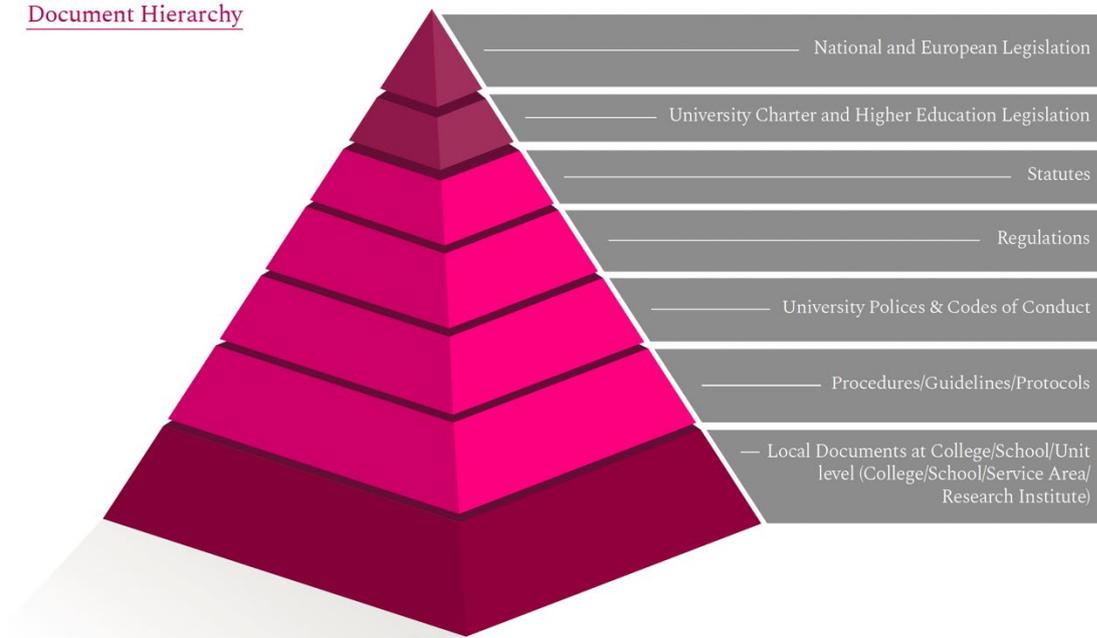
What is the University Document Hierarchy?

The document hierarchy for the University above represents a hierarchy of document categories through which the University governs its operations. The hierarchy is intended to assist staff, students and others in understanding the role of particular categories of documents in supporting effective governance and management of our work. The higher a document is placed in the hierarchy the greater its effect is likely to be in practice. In the event there is a conflict between one document and another placed higher in the document hierarchy the higher placed document takes precedence. **The correct categorisation of a document is vital and will depend upon the nature & purpose of the document concerned.**

Definitions and examples of each type of document are set out below to assist document authors. When drafting a new document, or revising an existing document, the author(s) should review these in order to allocate the document to its correct category within the University's document hierarchy.

1. The author should avoid classifying a document as belonging in a particular category unless it substantially meets the definition of these types of documents as set out below in the definitions section.
2. It is important that all categories of document in the hierarchy are carefully drafted and prepared. Once they have been appropriately approved and circulated, it is important that their provisions are followed by all staff.
3. Colleagues can contact:
   - the Office of the Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs for assistance with general queries: Email: govandacademicaffairs@universityofgalway.ie
   - The Quality Office for specific queries relating to Policies. Email: quality@universityofgalway.ie

Definitions

National and European legislation

We are required to comply with a variety of relevant laws at both national and European level. Some examples include legislation in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, data protection, public procurement, freedom of information, ethics in public office, employment rights and protected disclosures.

In some areas of the law, where the European Union has specific competence, European legislation takes precedence over national legislation. An example is Data Protection (General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679).

Our University Charter and higher education legislation

There are key Acts, or pieces of legislation, which set out the University's establishment and the legal provisions under which it operates.

University of Galway was established by the Colleges (Ireland) Act in 1845. The University was first known as Queens College Galway. In 1908, in a Charter under the Irish Universities Act 1908, Queens College Galway was renamed University College Galway, and it was reconstituted as a constituent college of the then newly established National University of Ireland (NUI).

In 1997, it was reconstituted as a University under the Universities Act, 1997 which set out how all universities in the State are governed, with the name National University of Ireland, Galway - Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh. While this remains our legal name and we continue to be a constituent college of the National University of Ireland, the trading name of the University changed on 1 September 2022 to University of Galway.

The most recent legislation in relation to governance of the higher education sector in Ireland was enacted in 2022. The Higher Education Authority Act 2022 updates some of the

provisions of the Universities Act 1997, including those relating to the composition and key functions of governing authorities.

Statutes, Regulations and Policies

University of Galway's Statutes, Regulations and Policies provide the **internal** legal and governance framework for the University. They are usually linked to the relevant legislation and address the implementation in practice of provisions in the legislation and/or cover new areas of operation which may not be covered in the legislation.

For some areas of operations (e.g. health and safety, procurement, human resources, freedom of information, data protection, protected disclosures, quality) there may also be other legislation which will guide the development of relevant university policies, procedures and other governance documentation.

Statutes

Since its foundation, the University of Galway has been governed according to its Statutes. They are rules made by the University for the administration of its internal affairs. Statutes have typically dealt with the structures in the University and the roles and responsibilities of key office-holders and units. Statutes are approved by Údarás na hOllscoile with the agreement of Academic Council.

With the Statutes increasing in number over time, work is close to completion on consolidation of their key provisions into a Principal Statute for clarity and ease of reference.

Current Examples:
Statute CCCLXXI (371) Composition of the University Management Team
Statute CCCLVI (356) Composition of Academic Council

Regulations

University Regulations are secondary to Statutes in the University hierarchy. They often deal with structures at College, School and Discipline level.

Current Examples:
Regulation 2-2018 - Role and Structure of College Boards
Regulation 1-2018 - re Role and Reporting Relationships of Executive Deans

Policies

A policy is a formal high-level statement of principle guiding the University's operations and decision making.

A policy is often developed as a means of implementing specific legal or statutory requirements. University-wide policies are generally adopted or approved by the Governing

Authority or another senior governance body within the university (Academic Council or the University Management Team).

A policy may stand alone or can be implemented through supporting documents, for example procedures, protocols or one of the other document categories lower than a policy in the document hierarchy. In fact, many policies require associated procedures (see Procedures. **Once approved, compliance with a policy is mandatory.**

Current Examples:

QA 400 Data Protection Policy

QA 050 Curriculum Design and Management Policy

Our central Policy and Procedures Repository currently hosts the policies, procedures, rules, regulations, guidelines and methods for conducting various key processes including teaching, research and support processes. These must be designed to reflect best practice in higher education and are currently subject to **review at least once every seven years**.

'QA002 Policies and Procedures' sets out how to create policies and procedures.

This approach is under review by the Quality Office, with preparatory work being undertaken in 2022 with a view to updating the Policy Management Framework for the University.

Codes of Conduct

Codes of Conduct sit at the same level as policies in the University document hierarchy and will also have University-wide application. A Code of Conduct is a set of rules outlining the responsibilities of, or the proper practices for, an individual, unit, group or organisation. There will be relatively few documents with this classification in the University.

Current Example:
Student Code of Conduct
Staff Code of Conduct

Procedures, Guidelines and Protocols

Procedures

A procedure is a series of detailed steps which support the practical implementation of a policy.

Current Examples:
Student Complaints Procedure
Procedures for dealing with breaches of examination regulations

Guidelines

Guidelines set out the approach to be taken towards a particular issue and usually include "good practice" recommendations.

Protocols

A Protocol is a defined set of actions to be taken on the occurrence of a specific event.

Local Documents at Unit level (College/School/Service Area/Research Institute)

Local documents are documents with local application and/or created for a specific purpose which does not have a University-wide application.
Note: Local documents should not set out procedures/arrangements which are inconsistent with University-wide policies, codes, guidelines or protocols.

Office of the Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs
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