

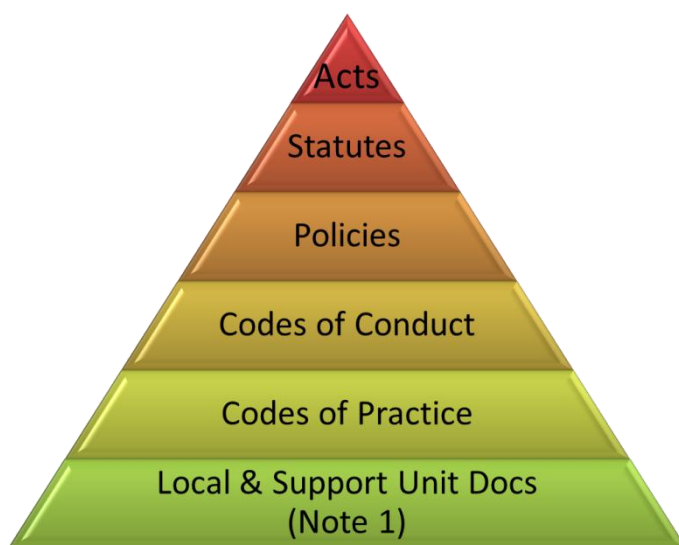
University Document Hierarchy

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the hierarchy of instruments and documents, hereinafter collectively referred to as 'documents', which are in use within the Dublin City University community. The hierarchy will assist staff, students and others in understanding where a document resides within the overall governance documentation framework of both the university and all other entities which are ultimately governed by the university's Governing Authority. In addition, it also outlines definitions for the various categories of documents referred to in the hierarchy.

Document Hierarchy

The university's document hierarchy is represented in the diagram below. It represents a hierarchy of document categories through which the university seeks to govern its operations. The higher a document is placed in the hierarchy the greater its effect is likely to be in practice. Where one document conflicts with another document placed higher in the document hierarchy the higher placed document takes precedence. The correct categorization of a document is vital and will depend upon the nature & purpose of the document concerned. Further guidance on this aspect of the hierarchy is given in the sections below dealing with 'Rules' and 'Definitions'.



Note 1 – Local & Support Unit Documents

- a) Regulations
- b) Charters
- c) Constitutions
- d) Guides / Guidelines
- e) Principles
- f) Procedures
- g) Protocols
- h) Statements
- i) Terms & conditions

Rules

Rule # 1

When drafting a new document, or revising an existing document, the author should give due consideration to allocating the document to its correct category within the document hierarchy. To assist with this the definitions for the most common document categories are listed below.

Rule # 2

Where possible, the author should avoid designating a document as a policy, regulation or code of conduct / practice unless it substantially meets the definition of these types of documents as set out below in the definitions section. It may be more appropriate to use one of the lower ranked categories in the document hierarchy for documents which do not match the definition of a policy, regulation or code of conduct / practice.

Definitions

Acts

The terms 'Acts' refers to the body of legislation currently in force within the State. In the university's case it refers primarily, but not exclusively, to the Dublin City University Act 1989 which established the university and the Universities Act 1997 which sets out how universities in the State are to be governed. The Acts are the basis for all other documents listed in the hierarchy. Statutes and policies provide additional requirements for practice than specified in the relevant legislation and / or cover new areas of operation not covered in legislation. For some areas of operations (e.g. health and safety, human resources, freedom of information) there may also be other legislation which will guide the development of relevant university policies, procedures and other governance documentation.

Statutes

These are permanent rules made by the university for the administration of its internal affairs.

Example: DCU Statute # 4 – Dispute Resolution.

Policies

A policy is a statement of intent which can be used to guide decisions. A policy may stand on its own or can be implemented through procedures, protocols or one of the other document categories shown under 'Policies' in the university document hierarchy. University policies are generally adopted or approved by the Governing Authority or another senior governance body within the university whereas local & support unit documents are usually developed, approved and adopted at a unit level. Once approved compliance with a university policy is mandatory.

Example: DCU Data Protection Policy.

Codes of Conduct

A code of conduct is a set of rules outlining the responsibilities of, or the proper practices for, an individual, unit, group or organization.

Example: DCU Code of Conduct for Members of the Governing Authority.

Codes of Practice

A code of practice is a code or framework adopted by a profession or organization, such as a university, to regulate its activities. A code of practice can also be styled as a code of responsibility, which will discuss difficult issues or difficult decisions that will often need to be made, and provide a clear account of what behaviour is considered "ethical", "correct" or "right" in the circumstances referred to.

Example: DCU Code of Good Research Practice.

Local & Support Unit Documentation (in a university context)

a) Regulations

A regulation in this context is a written instrument which sets out rules and / or procedures regarding a particular academic issue or topic.

Example: DCU Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research & Thesis

b) Charters

A charter is the grant of authority or rights, stating that the grantor formally recognizes the prerogative of the recipient to exercise the rights specified. It can also refer to a statement of the scope, objectives and participants in an activity or function. It provides a preliminary delineation of roles and responsibilities, outlines the objectives, identifies the main stakeholders and defines the authority of those involved. It may also serve as a reference of authority for the future of the activity or function.

Example: DCU Internal Audit Charter.

c) Constitutions

A constitution is a set of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a university unit is governed.

Example: Faculty of Science & Health Constitution.

d) Guides & Guidelines

A guide is generally a written document which explains, in general terms, the background to a particular issue or matter. A guideline is a statement by which to determine a course of action. A guideline aims to streamline particular processes according to a set routine, set of steps to be followed or by sound practice.

Examples: 1) Guide to Postgraduate Study Abroad.
2) Data Handling Guidelines.

e) Principles

A principle is an established standard or test, for measuring, regulating, or guiding conduct or practice. A principle is a general and fundamental truth that may be used in deciding conduct or choice.

Example: Principles for Academic Workload Allocation.

f) Procedures

A procedure is a series of written interrelated steps which may assist in the implementation of a policy. Procedures establish who, what, where and when in relation to a given activity as well as establishing accountability in support of the implementation of a policy. University procedures should:

- be written in a format that is easy to follow;
- be published separately from the policy to which they relate;
- be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to check for compatibility with the most recent versions of the related policy; and
- generally not require formal approval by senior executive levels of the university.

Example: Student Complaints Procedure.

g) Protocols

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

Example: University protocol to be followed when informed of a death.

h) Statements

A statement is a communication or declaration in writing setting forth facts, particulars, courses of action etc.

Example: Equality Diversity Statement.

A further example of a statement is a Privacy Statement which is a statement that discloses some or all of the ways a party gathers, uses, discloses and manages a customer or client's data. In the case of a university it can often be a statement that declares how it collects, stores, and releases the personal information that it collects. It informs the individual, known as the 'data subject', what specific information is collected, and whether it is to be kept confidential, shared with partners, or transferred to other firms or enterprises.

i) Terms & Conditions

Terms and conditions are commonly found in contracts or agreements which are entered into by two or more parties. A contractual term is 'any provision forming part of a contract' and they give rise to a contractual obligation for which the breach of which can give rise to litigation. Conditions are generally more onerous clauses in contract or agreement. A breach of a condition repudiates the contract or agreement and it allows the other party(s) to discharge the contract or agreement.

Example: Procurement – Standard Terms and Conditions.

Related Documentation


- 1) Policy on the Formulation and Issuance of University Policies ('Policy on Policies') which was approved by the Executive in October 2015.
- 2) Guidelines on Policy Development.
- 3) Policy Template.

All of the above, with the exception of No. 1, can be found at the same DCU website location as this document. No. 1 can be found in the A-Z of policies section of the university website.

Contact

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Version Control

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