

# Head of School Appointment Process Policy



**Policy owner(s)** UCD Human Resources, University Secretariat      **Approval date and body** UMT, January 2015

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to outline the practical steps which should be taken, subject to the jurisdiction of the Statute, for the nomination of an individual to act as Head of School.

## 2. Principles

The Statutory basis for the appointment of Heads of School in UCD is to be found in Governing Statute (32), Section 17. The Statute envisages five broad stages in the process as follows:

1. Consultation by the College Principal within the relevant School to achieve consensus, where possible, in identifying a recommended candidate;
2. Determination by the College Principal, following this consultation, of whether or not an advertised (internal and/or external) process should be undertaken;
3. Recommendation to the President by the College Principal of a suitable candidate emerging from either (1) or (2) above;
4. Consultation by the President with the Academic Council with regard to the recommendation emerging from (3) above;
5. Appointment by the President.

In addition, careful consideration needs to be given to a new appointment and their induction and this is dealt with as Stage 6 (below).

Academics promoted or appointed to the level of Professor are expected both to have the set of experience and skills required to be Head of School, and to be willing to serve the University and their School by taking on this role. In normal circumstances, the Head of School will be selected from amongst the Professoriate.

Appointment to the Headship of a School shall normally be for five years, but the President may make appointments for terms of different duration provided such appointments are not greater than five years. Heads of School shall be eligible for re-appointment.

- **Stage 1: Consultation**

Normally, twelve months prior to the formal initiation of the process envisaged by the Statute, it is recommended that the College Principal or their nominee consult with School Faculty and Staff to discuss the broad issue of succession planning in the light of the challenges and opportunities facing the School. Where a nominee is appointed by the College Principal to manage the consultation process, they will be a member of faculty and they will be

independent of the incumbent Head of School. At the end of the consultation period, the nominee will present their findings to the College Principal.

As a result of the consultation process, potential internal candidates should be identified and a broad analysis of their strengths and opportunities for development undertaken. At the discretion of the College Principal, a decision should be made as to the level of preliminary consultation they should undertake with any potential candidates identified at this preliminary stage.

It is recommended that the formal elements of the first stage would be handled directly by the College Principal or nominee. Consultation can include the incumbent Head of School, the School Executive and the opportunity for one-to-one meetings with all members of the School. It is proposed that these meetings would consider the School's Strategic Plan as background and context to the identification of the key qualities, attributes and experience required of the Head of School over the coming five year period.

The consultations should try to establish, in the first instance, as much consensus as possible, prior to the identification of potential specific candidates. The process should encourage any appropriate form of feedback to the College Principal or their nominee, either in open meetings or on an individual and confidential basis, from members of staff, including an invitation to propose names of individuals (including one's self) who would match the desired criteria. The consultation process should also actively probe the views of the School members as to the relative merits of an internal versus an international search and selection process.

- **Stage 2: Determination by College Principal of an appropriate selection process**

Following the data gathered in Stage 1, it will be for the College Principal to form a judgement as to the desirability or not of an advertised selection process. If the Principal is satisfied that the consultations undertaken at Stage 1 yield a clear consensus with regard to a suitable appointee, then it is open to the Principal to recommend that individual to the President without further process. It is also open to the College Principal to request any other form of event (for example, a seminar to be given to the School) to help them form that judgement. Any other forms of representation made to the College Principal in support of any candidate are valid (but not conclusive) forms of input to the Principal in helping them form the relevant judgement.

If the College Principal forms the view that an advertised process should occur, then the normal procedures governing such processes should apply. These include the preparation of a 'person specification', appropriate advertising (internal and/or external), invitation of expressions of interest, normal assessment processes (including the possibility of presentations to the School). In general, the assessment panel to be selected for the process should be composed in the same way as the composition of a panel for any analogous appointment. In particular, the provision of Governing Statute (32), Section 17 that "the School shall be represented on any search, selection or interview panel." (Part 7) must be applied.

- **Stage 3: Recommendation to President**

The Statute requires the College Principal to make a recommendation of a suitable candidate to the President. This recommendation may emerge either from Stage 1 or Stage 2 above. While the Statute is silent on the situation which would result from the failure to identify an appointable candidate from Stage 2, it seems clear that its intention is to afford the College Principal the discretion to engage in whatever form of search process is considered

necessary or to repeat the consultation process with whatever modified criteria appear reasonable.

- **Stages 4 and 5: Academic Council and President Approval**

The appointment is made by the President, following consultation with the Academic Council. It should be noted that the Statute makes provision, in Governing Statute (32), Section 17 “in special circumstances”, for the appointment by the President of any candidate to the role for a period “not exceeding twelve months as the Governing Authority may determine.” In this scenario, the President must inform the Academic Council of his decision. This confers discretion on the President for an appointment for a lesser period than the norm. For the avoidance of doubt, it is proposed that the President would seek the approval of the Governing Authority for the period of the appointment.

- **Stage 6: Handover Phase and Induction**

Once announced, the appointee should commence a handover from the current Head of School under a mentoring arrangement. The College Principal should also be involved in this process to ensure the alignment of the School with the overall strategy of the College. UCD HR should be involved in drawing up the guidelines for this period.

It is strongly recommended that the newly appointed Head attend the Head of School Induction programme – normally conducted in early September.

During the handover period, the successor should also be encouraged to attend any additional relevant courses which will support them in the Head of School. Further information can be sought from the People and Organisation Development section of UCD HR or the UCD People and Organisation Development website.

### 3. Related documents

Governing Statute (32), Section 17.

### 4. Version history

Version	Date	Description	Author
3.0	March 2009	Policy Versioning Implemented	UCD HR
4.0	January 2015	Policy amended following UMT approval	UCD HR
5.0	August 2018	Changed reference to People & Organisation Development	HR POD
6.0	18/06/2020	Policy moved to new template	S Raleigh
7.0	24/03/2025	Updated reference to Statute.	P.Fitzgerald