Guideline: Policy document consultation

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to provide information and support to University staff about the practices that should be followed when undertaking stakeholder consultation during the development and/or review of policy documents.

Guideline

Overview

1. This guideline should be read in conjunction with the Policy Governance Policy and Policy Governance Procedure.

2. Policies, procedures and standards govern the operations of the University. The University values the benefit of effective consultation with affected stakeholders during the development and review of any policy document to the successful and cost–effective implementation and ongoing operation of its policy framework. Stakeholder consultation should not be considered a “tick a box” exercise, but rather an opportunity to value add and identify potential problems before implementation commences.

3. What constitutes effective and genuine consultation will vary from policy document to policy document, and will depend on the nature and context of each policy document. These guidelines should not be interpreted as the definitive guide to effective consultation or a statement on minimum requirements. Rather they are intended to guide and inform decision–making about consultation processes.

4. In this guideline, references to ‘Policy Practitioner’ should be interpreted as meaning a reference to any person involved in coordinating the development or review of a policy document.

Identifying stakeholders

5. The Policy Practitioner should aim to identify as many stakeholders as possible, in preparation for the consultation phase. A Policy Document Concept Proposal (or a similar discussion paper) will be one of the first documents that will need to be produced. This document should detail the known stakeholders to be
consulted as part of the policy, procedure or standard development phase.

6. In developing a list of internal stakeholders, consideration should be given to including the following people, organisational units or other groups associated with the University:

a. Council and Committees of Council
b. Academic Board and Academic Committees
c. Specialist committees of the University: WHS Policy Committee, University ICT Governance Committee, University Staff Consultative Committee, University Access & Equity Committee, University Gender Equity Committee and University Reconciliation Action Plan Committee (this is not a definitive list of committees).
d. Senior Management Group: University Executive and College Deans.
e. Service Division Directors
f. College General Managers
g. Research School Directors
h. Heads of Departments/Schools
i. College Administrative Function Managers
j. Deputy/Associate Directors in Service Divisions
k. Associate Director, Work Environment Group
l. Manager, Audit & Risk
m. Coordinator of University statutes, rules and orders
n. Coordinator of Delegations
o. Managers of relevant enterprise systems
p. School Managers
q. ANU Students’ Association
r. ANU Postgraduate & Research Students’ Association
s. National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)*
t. Staff for whom there may be a work health and safety impact
u. Alumni of the University
v. Other student or campus groups of relevance

* The University has formal mechanisms for engagement with the NTEU. Please contact the Director, Human Resources, before approaching the NTEU.
7. In developing a list of internal stakeholders, a Policy Practitioner should have regard for the impact that:

- an academic policy document may have on ordinary operations and available resources of the University, consulting with the Executive Director, Administration and Planning, when appropriate.
- an administrative policy document may have on academic standards and the educational and research activities of the University, consulting with the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor and/or Pro Vice-Chancellor, when appropriate.

8. A Policy Practitioner may also need to consider external stakeholders, although engagement with them should be at the discretion of the relevant member of the University Executive or Service Division Director. Possible external stakeholders might include:
   a. Australian Government
   b. Australian Capital Territory Government
   c. Federal Department of Education
   d. Federal Department of Industry & Science
   e. Australian Research Council
   f. National Health and Medical Research Council
   g. Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
   h. Australian Taxation Office
   i. Businesses operating on the ANU campus
   j. Joint venture or other partners of the University
   k. Group of Eight: Universities Australia and Comcare.

Objectives for engagement

9. In seeking to engage with stakeholders, particularly internal stakeholders, Policy Practitioners should be mindful of the following objectives:

   a. The need to obtain views on alignment of the policy document objectives with the strategic goals and priorities of the University and its Colleges.
   b. The need to get general agreement that there is an academic or business need that is best addressed by the introduction/continuation of this policy document.
c. The need to identify and assess the operational impact and resource burden that implementation of the policy will place on organisational units, groups and individuals across the University.

d. The need to resolve excessive or unnecessary operational problems and resource burdens before the policy document is considered for final approval.

e. The need to ensure that the information being communicated in the policy document can be easily understood, interpreted and applied by others.

f. The need for the policy document to be comprehensive (inclusive of matters relevant to its operation) and to formalise any existing informal practices.

Methods of engagement

10. The method of engagement with stakeholders will vary from policy document to policy document, and will depend on the nature and context of each policy document.

11. In designing a method of engagement, Policy Practitioners should:
   a. consider their list of identified stakeholders
   b. determine the best way to reach these people and
   c. determine the most appropriate mechanism for ensuring that you get input that is informed and adds value to the development process.

12. Methods of engagement could include:
   a. Calls for written submissions or feedback
   b. Roundtable meeting and forums
   c. Focus groups
   d. User testing
   e. Surveys
   f. Webpages and online discussion forums
   g. One–on–one meetings with key stakeholders
   h. Simulations and stress testing
   i. Presentations
   j. Engaging relevant groups/teams at their regular meetings

13. The method and time allowed for consultation should be appropriate to the complexity and sensitivity of the subject matter of the policy document, and should meet any legislative obligation for consultation.
14. In designing the consultation phase, Policy Practitioners should be mindful of other time pressures that their stakeholders may be experiencing. Most staff and students of the University experience cyclical highs and lows in terms of time demands. Policy Practitioners are encouraged to adjust their expectations and plans accordingly.

15. As a general rule, a consultation process should ordinarily be conducted over a 2–3 week period, as a minimum.

**Record keeping**

16. A written log of all consultation undertaken, and feedback received, should be kept throughout the policy development process. A template consultation log is available online.

17. The consultation log should reflect changes that have been accepted, rejected or deferred and the reasons for this.

18. A copy of the consultation log should be kept on the relevant official file, and made available to key stakeholders as requested.