

Head of School Role and Responsibilities

14 November 2023

Introduction

This document outlines the role and responsibilities of Heads of Schools, recognising that there will be some internal diversity and flexibility within Colleges. It is assumed here that all schools have a School Board (consisting of the entire staff cohort) and a School Executive Committee (a smaller group under the leadership of the Head of School). Given the principle of collegiality, the Head of School is expected to carry out his/her duties through appropriate consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including staff and students and, where possible, seek consensus in the development of policies and in the implementation of decisions. Good leadership will entail delegating the implementation of a significant portion of decisions.

1. Role

The role of the Head of School is to provide strategic leadership and management of the School and to ensure compliance with all relevant University policies and regulatory/external bodies, as appropriate. The authority of the Head is critical to the smooth operation of the School.

Given the principles of collegiality, fairness, transparency and efficiency in decision-making processes, the Head of School is expected to carry out their duties through appropriate consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including staff and students and, where possible, seek consensus in the development of policies and in the implementation of decisions.

The Head will work in consultation with the Executive Dean of the College, the School Executive Committee, the School Board, the Heads of Discipline, Programme Directors and Research Centre Directors affiliated with the School, as required. The Head of School will play the lead role in developing and enhancing teaching and research programmes both within the School and in collaboration with other Schools, and in promoting excellence among staff and students. The role of the Head of School will also include specific responsibilities that may be delegated from time to time by the Executive Dean of the College.

2. Academic Planning and Communications

The Head of School will:

- Lead the development of annual operational plans for the School, in alignment with overall College and University strategy and planning and in consultation with the Executive Dean, Heads of Discipline/Subject, and the School Executive.
- Work with staff to ensure the implementation of the plans.
- Review the performance of the School in terms of its agreed plans.
- Represent the School on the College Executive Committee.
- Develop the agenda for and chair School Board meetings; and invite the Executive Dean to attend School Board meetings, on average once each semester.
- Ensure appropriate communication channels with all staff and students in the School (e.g. intranet, mailing lists, newsletters).
- The Head of School ensures that the Executive Dean has access to all required documentation for School Board meetings as needed.
- In consultation with the Executive Dean, establish means for bi-directional sharing of information on School business and UMT decisions.
- Be responsible for the utilisation of space and facilities within the School, in consultation with Heads of Discipline/Subject and Buildings & Estates and subject to University policies on the same. The HoS will be consulted on the development of such spaces.
- Co-ordinate and agree with the Heads of Discipline/Subject procedures for handling Freedom of Information requests.

3. Academic Affairs

The Head of School will:

- Provide leadership and promote excellence, innovation and improvement in the teaching and research mission of the School.
- Ensure that there is appropriate management in place for all academic programmes within the School.
- Ensure that an equitable and transparent workload allocation model (WAM) is used in accordance with the WAM policy. This should ensure that mentoring and performance goals encompass, as appropriate, teaching, research and contribution.
- Ensure, in collaboration with the VPRI and Vice-Dean for Research, that a clear research strategy is in place for the School, and that it informs the research aspect of annual operational planning.
- Foster interdisciplinarity and collaboration within the School, with other Schools, and with other Colleges and institutions in both teaching and research.
- Ensure the delivery of high quality teaching programmes.
- Ensure the implementation of appropriate University policies.
- Ensure the regular review, evaluation, rationalisation and development of programmes offered by the School.

- Take responsibility for the implementation of effective quality assurance procedures and, where relevant, accreditations within the School.
- Co-ordinate and agree with the Heads of Discipline/Subject procedures for handling Quality Reviews, in line with the relevant University policies.
- Ensure that structures exist for appropriate interaction with and input from students.
- The HoS will be expected to continue their research/scholarship during their term as HoS.

4. Health and Safety

In accordance with the [University of Galway Safety Statement](#), the Head of School has responsibility for compliance with and the implementation of duties arising under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. This responsibility is with respect to the implementation and management of the policies, procedures, arrangements and controls applicable to the School in order to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of employees and others they are responsible for, and includes:

- Co-ordinating and agreeing procedures for handling Health and Safety in accordance with the [University of Galway Safety Statement](#) and in coordination with the Director of Safety and the Health and Safety officer in University of Galway, the Dean of the College, Heads of Discipline/Subject and Safety Representatives in the School.
- Implementation, management and enforcement of a Safety Management System within the School
- Providing leadership in the School with respect to appointing a Safety officer and Safety Committee, and recruiting Fire Marshals, First Aider Responders, DSE Assessors
- Prepare and review (annually) the School Safety Statement to specify how the safety, health and welfare of the Unit's employees shall be secured and managed.
- Ensure that all operational activities conducted in the Unit have a "person in charge", responsible for ensuring that the activity in question is designed, planned and executed safely and in compliance with the University and Unit's safety management system.
- Ensure the identification of hazards and preparation of written risk assessment in respect of activities undertaken in and by the School
- Verifying that accurate and up to date records of hazards identified, risk assessed and risk management measures are being documented and maintained by persons in charge e.g. annual Principal Investigator Compliance Checklist completed by PI and provided to their Head of Unit.
- Communicate the School Safety Statement and other relevant health and safety documentation and information to the School staff in an understandable form, manner and language.
- Ensuring that staff are aware of safety contact details and safety plans
- Ensuring that equipment inspections are being conducted
- Liaising with Buildings and Estates and Health and Safety office to organise training and ensuring that staff attend centrally arranged safety courses, as appropriate.

- Arrange for the identification of safety equipment requirements, including personal protective equipment for staff in the School, and to make arrangements for its provision (budget), as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Making staff aware of University Stress Policy and Bullying Policy
- Ensuring that staff are aware of the entitlement to a specific risk assessment for pregnant, breast-feeding and post-natal employees
- Notifying the Director of Safety and the Health and Safety officer in University of Galway on Health and Safety, in particular to ensure that accidents/dangerous occurrences are reported and investigated in accordance with the Act and the University's reporting and investigation procedure
- The Head of Unit may appoint a person to assist them in the discharge of their Head of Unit responsibilities. The Head of Unit retains overall responsibility for implementation and management of the safety management system and compliance with health and safety duties arising in respect of the functional areas, activities and matters under their control and/or remit, notwithstanding the appointment of a Safety Coordinator or other person to assist them in this role in their Unit

4. Human Resources

With the support of the HR unit, the Head of School:

- Has overall responsibility for staffing matters in the School.
- Will play the lead role in the recruitment of staff in the School; it is preferable that the Head of School should participate on Boards of Assessors pertaining to all appointments within the School. If appropriate, the Head of School may represent the President as chair of the Board of Assessors.
- Will support the development and implementation of the University EDI Strategy, including supporting application and implementation of Athena Swan at School level.
- Is responsible for ensuring the successful local induction and onboarding of new staff.
- Is responsible for ensuring the effective management of the probation policy for new staff.
- Will act as appropriate in the promotions process for staff within the School.
- Will act with the Executive Dean in grievance procedures for staff and relevant disciplinary procedures for both staff and students.
- Will lead and oversee the implement the Performance for Growth process within the School, in collaboration with senior colleagues, where appropriate.

5. Financial Management

With the support of the Finance Unit, the Head of School will:

- Work with the Executive Dean, College Finance and Business Managers (CF&BMs), and the Bursar's office on multi-annual financial planning and budget setting for the School in line with the School's strategic plans.
- Ensure that the School is managed sustainably including:
 - i. Identifying and implementing new sources of revenue generation
 - ii. Identifying and implementing efficiency savings
 - iii. Delivering on targets as per agreed plans
 - iv. Managing expenditure within the approved School budget
 - v. Allocating available resources in line with the School's strategic plan
- Monitor (with the support the CF&BM) and regularly report on actual income and expenditure versus budget to the School Executive and School Board.
- Ensure that all expenditure is incurred in line with University policies and procedures, National and EU legislation and is compliant with all procurement requirements and facilitate communication of these requirements to School personnel.

6. Reporting Relationships

- The Head of School shall report to the Executive Dean of College.
- The Heads of Discipline and Deputy Heads of School (where these exist) and all other academic staff shall report to the Head of School. In large schools line operational management responsibilities may be delegated to one or more senior staff in the school.
- A senior administrative role shall exist in each school, with the key task of assisting the Head of School in the setting and delivery of the School's mission.
- The School Administrator/Manager reports to the Director of Strategic Development of the College but, from an operating perspective, they perform their duties under the direction of the Head of School.
- Technical staff in the School (where these exist) report to the Chief Technical Officer in the School, who reports to the Head of School or Head of School's delegate.

7. General

- The University, in collaboration with the Colleges, will ensure that a broad induction, covering all components of the role, and leadership development courses are provided to all Heads of School. These may also be opened to aspiring Heads of School, on the recommendation of the Executive Dean.
- The College shall ensure, where possible, a timely and detailed handover from a former HoS to a new HoS.
- Where new/revised policies and procedures are put in place that have a role for the Head of School, Heads of Schools will be consulted via their UMT member on those policies/procedures in advance of approval at UMT.
- The allocation of time to the role of Head of School shall be within the parameters

outlined in the Workload Allocation Model.

- A Heads of Schools and Units Forum shall meet at least twice yearly to discuss areas of common concern and to share best practice.

Head of School Appointment Processes

14 November 2023

1. Appointment of Head of School

The role of Head of School occupies a central position in the management and leadership structure of the University. On the one hand, there is the responsibility to safeguard the interests of the College and, ultimately, the University and the requirement to implement relevant procedures that have been developed at College and University levels. Equally, the role of Head of School involves responsibilities associated with the staff and students in the School and the need to represent the interests of the School.

It will normally be the case that the post is filled by internal competition. Where the Executive Dean, following consultation with the College Executive and School Board, considers that it is necessary to advertise the post externally, either on the basis that there are no internal applicants who meet the criteria for the post and are deemed appointable or for other strategic reasons, the post can be advertised externally. In such circumstances, the appointment shall be made in accordance, as far as possible, with the timeline in section 8.1 below, while following the normal University external recruitment procedures.

Appointment procedures for Head of School in the event of an internal competition are set out below:

8.1 Model for the identification, recommendation and appointment of Head of School

- 8.1.1 At a date not later than nine months prior to an impending vacancy, the Executive Dean will initiate the process for the appointment of the relevant Head of School.
- 8.1.2 Notification of the impending vacancy will be sent by the Executive Dean to all members of the relevant School, together with the document setting out the role and responsibilities of Head of School.
- 8.1.3 Applications will be invited, through the internal HR recruitment procedures, by a closing date not later than 7 months prior to the impending vacancy.
- 8.1.4 The Executive Dean will coordinate the establishment of an Assessment

Board:

8.1.4.1 The composition of the Board shall be as follows:

- Executive Dean of the College (Chair)
- Two members of the academic staff of the School (nominated by the School Board)
- Two members of academic staff, one from another School in the College and one from another College, nominated by the Executive Dean, and appointed by the President.¹
- The Board will reflect the University's requirement for overall gender balance in the membership of selection boards

8.1.4.2 The role of the Assessment Board is to assess the merit of each applicant, using a standardised and consistent process, and to recommend for appointment the applicant with the greatest merit in conjunction with the criteria specified for the post.

8.15 All eligible applicants will be invited to an interview by the Assessment Board. Applicants should make a presentation to the Assessment Board only, to which all members of the School will be invited, setting out their plans for the School. Questions from those present may only be in relation to the presentation, and feedback will be sought by the Assessment Board from School members present at the presentations. It is expected that the Assessment Board must take due cognisance of the comments and considerations of the members of the School who are present at all presentations. There is no formal voting in this process, other than, if necessary, in the final decision-making by the Assessment Board itself.

8.16 Any appeal must be made in line with the University's recruitment policy.

8.17 The Assessment Board will recommend the name of its preferred candidate to the President, who shall make the appointment. The name of the successful candidate shall normally be communicated not later than three months prior to assuming the role of Head of School. The successful candidate shall at this point assume membership of the School Executive, in order to help ensure a smooth transition.

8.18 The report, as it relates to the appointed candidate only, shall also be forwarded to the School Board for noting.

8.19 If the appointed candidate steps down within 12 months of taking up the

¹ The School Board shall elect its members of the Appointment Board first, and in any case before the post is advertised, and these shall normally be gender-balanced.

role, the post will be filled in line with the recruitment policy.

8.2 Eligibility

It is expected that those of professorial standing will be willing to serve as Head of School, which is a leadership role with line management responsibility. However, permanent academic staff at all grades from Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor upwards are eligible to apply for the role of Head of School.

8.3 Term of Office and Reappointment Procedure

Appointment of Heads of School shall normally be for a period of four years, renewable for one further period of four years, on the recommendation of the Dean to the President, and following consultation with the School Board. In such an event, the outgoing Head of School should inform the Dean, in writing, not later than nine months prior to the end of their term of office, whether they wish to be considered for a second term.

The normal start date for a Head of School shall be July 1st. This common date will facilitate the coordination of induction and development supports for new Heads of School.²

² Where current office holders are due to finish on a different date, they may be asked to remain in post until that date, or their successor shall be appointed with an end date of 30 June, adding the necessary months to ensure that four years minimum are completed.

Notes:

- The Head of School will be eligible to apply for a sabbatical, additional to their normal sabbatical eligibility, to begin within 12 months of the completion of their term to facilitate a speedy re-engagement with their research activities.¹ In instances where the completion of the term(s) as Head of School coincides with an eligibility to apply for Sabbatical Leave as laid out in the Research Sabbatical Leave Policy (QA238), then the out-going Head of School can request up to 6 months of additional Sabbatical Leave per four-year term served as Head of School,² subject to compliance with all other aspects of the Sabbatical Leave Policy.³
- Save in exceptional circumstances, a term of Head of School shall not be interrupted by a period of Sabbatical Leave. In instances where an eligibility to apply for Sabbatical Leave as laid out in the Sabbatical Leave Policy (QA238) arises during a term of Head of School, the Head of School shall normally defer availing of Sabbatical Leave until the completion of the term as Head of School. Such a deferral shall not impact on the eligibility of the Head of School to make an application for a second or subsequent period of Sabbatical Leave. In the event that Sabbatical Leave is deferred during the term of a Head of School, eligibility for this and subsequent periods of Sabbatical Leave will be computed from the original date of eligibility to apply as laid out in the Sabbatical Leave Policy.
- In exceptional circumstances, where the term of a Head of School is renewed, the Head of School may apply for Sabbatical Leave linked to his/her normal eligibility under the Sabbatical Leave Policy or to his/her eligibility as laid out here, immediately upon completion of the first term and prior to the start of the second term.

Notes

The following footnotes provide information on some of the provisions in the document.

¹ In instances where an outgoing Head of School avails of protected leave (*e.g.*, Maternity leave, parental leave, sick leave), the Head of School will be eligible to apply for a period of Sabbatical Leave linked to their term as Head of School that should begin within a period of time that is not greater than the period of protected leave plus 12 months of the completion of their term as Head of School.

² The eligibility for an additional period of Sabbatical leave only applies where a Head of School has completed a full four-year term.

³ Clause 7.5 of the Research Sabbatical Leave Policy states: “*A member of staff who does not serve in the University, on his/her return from research sabbatical leave, for a period equivalent to the period of the leave will normally not have that period of leave taken into account for the purposes of computing service for pension.*” The completion of a term or terms as Head of School, and the particular Research Sabbatical Leave entitlement associated

therewith, shall be regarded as an exceptional circumstance with regard to this rule.