

**UOW ADMINISTRATION**

Policy and Governance Unit, Academic Registrar's Division

CONSULTATION TIPS

Consultation plays a key part in the policy cycle and is an important tool for:

- testing whether a proposed policy reflects the realities of a problem
- identifying the competing interests of different people or groups
- building consensus
- supporting the principles of transparency and participation in the policy making process.

Inadequate consultation can result in poor policy which cannot be effectively implemented or in deliberate or inadvertent non-compliance.

On the flip side, consultation can be a time consuming and labour intensive process. A decision therefore needs to be made about what degree of consultation is desirable/necessary to make a policy decision. Some problems require more involvement than others.

The different types of consultation can be placed on a continuum from minimum to maximum participation. The following types of consultation in the area of public policy development are identified in *The Australian Policy Handbook* (Bridgman and Davis, pp. 80-84).

Minimum Participation

Information: surveys, focus groups, public information campaign

Consultation: key contacts, interest group meetings, circulation of proposals

Partnerships: advisory committees, policy communities

Delegation: public inquiries, studies by independent consultants

Control: referenda, privatisation

Maximum Partnership

The first three of these methods are most relevant to the University context; which method is suitable in a given case will depend on the nature of the problem and the people that are affected by it. The different modes will result in varying quality and quantity of information gathered. This should be factored into the policy schedule.

Consultation should be undertaken throughout the policy development process

- Consult **early** to alert key stakeholders about potential policy changes
- Consult **during** the policy development process to keep the channels of communication open
- Consult **after** to feed into the evaluation and monitoring process

CONSULTATION CHECKLIST

Before

- Include a Consultation strategy in the project plan and get this approved by the delegated authority or committee.
- Define the intended outcomes of the consultation and make them its focus.

During

- Consultation should be undertaken throughout the policy cycle.
- Distribute documents well ahead to allow people to share the information with colleagues and managers
- Tell participants how the results and their input will be used and not used.
- Acknowledge the non-negotiable elements in the consultation process: be honest with participants about what they can influence and what they cannot.
- Do not let your consultation process be sidetracked or hijacked by personal agendas or irrelevant responses.
- Have good record management procedures to record input and responses and the decision making processes.
- Report back to the delegated authority or committee on the consultation using sound logic that can be justified from the research and consultation.
- Acknowledge the comments of stakeholder groups and individuals.

After

- After a decision has been made inform those consulted of the policy outcome.