

# Part 1

## Performance & Development Review (PDR) Guidelines

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University's strategic plan, "*Towards 2016*" recognises that an essential part of enabling staff to achieve the highest standards of performance and realise their full potential within the organisation, is to have a means by which performance is linked to agreed objectives and supported through appropriate development.
- 1.2 Performance & Development Review (PDR) is not a totally new initiative for the University, as there was already an agreement on 'performance appraisal' in respect of academic and academic related staff, by which appraisals are to be conducted every two years. This system is not, however, currently widely applied across this staff group.
- 1.3 In addition, some departments have devised their own "appraisal systems" for other staff groups, eg: Imago Services, Library, SDC and more recently a pilot scheme in IT. The feedback in relation to these schemes, is that they generally work well and are accepted by the staff involved.
- 1.4 The need for all staff to be covered by a common framework, with regard to PDR, is widely accepted, but the successful operation of the scheme will depend upon the whole-hearted commitment of the University and in particular, of its senior staff, as well as trade union representatives.
- 1.5 The core principles of the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process, as agreed by Council, provide for:
  - A formal, annual review for each member of staff
  - The setting of mutually agreed, achievable objectives that guide and balance an individual's contribution
  - The identification of development needs and plans that facilitate the achievement of individual, team and University objectives
  - The determination of resources, where appropriate, required by the individual or team to work towards achieving the objectives
  - The monitoring of progress towards the agreed outcomes of the annual review

## 2. Framework Principles:

- Scheme to be called Performance & Development Review (PDR) throughout the University, including existing schemes, (to reflect that it is about reviewing Performance **and** Development)
- Annual process with interim Review meetings
- Applicable to all University staff (post probation) – not optional
- Conducted by the responsible Manager/HoD (*recognising that alternative arrangements may need to be made where academic HoDs have a large number of direct reports*)
- Feedback on performance to be given
- Setting of objectives for year to come
- Identification of (relevant) development needs (linked to role and objectives)
- An agreed record to be kept
- Paperwork – examples would be provided in the guidance document, but not to be prescriptive – *thereby allowing local adaptation*
- Review of Job Description, if relevant, to ensure that it is upto date
- “Grandparent” role (manager’s manager) to oversee process and sign off record

2.1 The review process will be conducted in a manner fully consistent with the University’s equality and diversity policies.

## 3. Implementation:

3.1 Departments will be free to determine their own timeframes for this process, providing they follow an annual cycle, but the aim is that all staff (other than probationers) should have had a PDR in the 12 months preceding December 2010. (Where staff have had an appraisal under a different process in the preceding 12 months, they will have their first PDR a year later)

3.2 Reviewers will, unless they have had experience and training in conducting similar processes, need to be trained to carry out PDRs properly, including and equality and diversity issues that may arise; employees (reviewees) will need to be fully and carefully informed about how it will affect them. For new employees, this will be covered as part of their Induction to the University.

3.3 The principle of cascading PDRs, whilst helpful, is neither mandatory nor essential.

## **4. Rights & Responsibilities**

4.1 All participants in the PDR process have rights and responsibilities, which need to be made clear in the training and guidance.

### Staff

All staff have a right to:

- A PDR which identifies their strengths and weaknesses and provides feedback on their performance and achievements;
- An opportunity to agree relevant development needs and the means by which these are to be addressed;
- A PDR process which is fair and non-discriminatory;
- Feedback on performance which is constructive and objective;
- A climate of trust, where self-identified weaknesses are not criticised.

All staff have a responsibility to:

- Prepare for PDR meetings;
- Actively engage with their manager (Reviewer) in discussion about their performance, future objectives and development needs;
- Be honest about their own weaknesses and identify solutions to address them;
- Accept feedback on performance, where it is justified and objective.

### Managers/Reviewers

Managers/Reviewers will have the right to:

- Training in the application of the PDR process (if required);
- Some degree of discretion in the management of the PDR process locally, within the agreed Framework;
- Time to undertake PDRs during the course of their normal working day;
- Appropriate support from senior managers when making difficult decisions

Managers/Reviewers have a responsibility to:

- Communicate clearly what they expect individuals to achieve and the standards against which they are assessed
- Provide regular feedback and make the PDR an on-going process
- Support staff in the achievement of relevant learning and development needs, as identified through their PDR, including the provision of coaching and mentoring, where that is appropriate.
- Prepare for PDR meetings
- Provide honest and objective feedback to staff about their performance
- Identify and seek to address any relevant development needs of the reviewee
- Be willing to subject their decisions to more senior managers
- Create a climate of trust so that an individual can be open and honest about their performance without fear of unwarranted criticism.
- Support staff in the achievement of their objectives
- Complete the PDRs of their allocated reviewees accurately and on time.

## Heads of Departments

HoDs will be responsible for

- managing the PDR process locally,
- ensuring that the process is applied to all post probation staff
- ensuring that PDR is supported by trained/experienced reviewers
- all documentation is filed confidentially

## **5. Process**

The main stages of the PDR are:

### **5.1 Stage 1 – Preparation**

Having agreed and confirmed the Reviewer and 'grandparent' identities, as well as the time and place for the PDR meeting, the Reviewer and Reviewee will then need to prepare in advance of the meeting. They will need to reflect upon progress and achievements over the past year and be thinking about the objectives and associated development needs for the forthcoming year. (Example preparation forms are provided in the Guidance notes)

### **5.2 Stage 2 – Review Meeting**

This is a formal opportunity to discuss matters identified in stage 1 and to clarify and agree the performance and development plans. The outcome of the discussion should be recorded and example forms are provided for this purpose.

### **5.3 Stage 3 – Agreement/Sign off**

Once signed by the Reviewer and Reviewee, the completed record form should be passed to the senior manager ('Grandparent') for sign off.

## **Part 2**

### **Performance & Development Review - FAQs**

#### **What are Performance & Development Reviews (PDRs)?**

PDRs are regular assessments of an employee's performance, potential and development needs. The PDR is an opportunity to take an overall view of work content, loads and volumes, to look back on what has been achieved during the past year and agree objectives for the forthcoming year. PDRs should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of effective management of staff.

#### **What are we setting out to achieve?**

Consistent with the '*Towards 2016*' strategy, the University is seeking to provide a performance and development review process to encourage excellence in research, teaching and the administration and the services that support these activities. In addition to individual effort, it is recognised that the provision of adequate and appropriate levels of support and resources, by the institution, is crucial. It is also understood that for members of academic staff, academic freedom and a significant level of autonomy, are essential, if such excellence is to be achieved.

#### **What are the aims of PDRs?**

PDRs give managers (Reviewers) and staff (Reviewees) opportunities to discuss, on a one to one basis, how employees are progressing and to see what sort of improvements can be made. The intention is to build on their strengths, improve weaknesses and enable them to perform more effectively.

The review of potential and individual development needs, helps predict the level and type of work that employees will be capable of doing in the future and how they can be best developed to maximise their contribution to the organisation.

#### **What are the benefits of PDRs?**

PDRs can help to improve employees' job performance, strengthen working relationships and improve managerial effectiveness. They can help to reveal problems which may be restricting employees' progress and causing inefficient work practices.

Some managers may talk to their staff regularly about their performance at work, including any associated problems and may not therefore see the need for a formal PDR system. Regular dialogue between managers and their staff about work performance should, of course, be encouraged. However, in the absence of a formal review scheme, much will depend on the attitude of individual managers. Some will give regular feedback on their employees' performance and potential, with discussion about development needs, while others may neglect this responsibility. Also, in large academic departments, because of the numbers involved, some HoDs may not have the opportunity to have such discussions with everyone within their area of responsibility.

A PDR process can help develop a greater degree of consistency, by ensuring that managers (Reviewers) and employees meet formally and regularly to discuss performance and potential. It also provides continuity of approach when managers change.

Experience shows that this process can encourage better performance from employees.

PDRs can also provide information to assist succession planning and to determine the suitability of employees for promotion, for particular types of employment and training. In addition, they can improve communications by giving employees an opportunity to talk about their ideas and expectations and to be told how they are progressing. This process can also improve the quality of working life by increasing mutual understanding between managers and staff.

### **Which staff should be reviewed?**

All University staff should have a PDR on an annual basis, including those staff on fixed-term appointments.

However, staff on probation will not undertake PDRs, but once they have completed the probationary period successfully, their next review will be in the form of a PDR, bringing them in line with other colleagues.

### **Where does PDR fit into performance management?**

The performance and development review process is designed to connect individual contribution and career aspirations to the achievement of the University's objectives and strategic direction. It is intended to help individuals reflect constructively, but critically, upon their own performance in relation to the organisation's expectations of them. By improving this understanding, the PDR process will play an important role in the prevention of unsatisfactory performance.

However, PDR is not a formal mechanism for dealing with serious underperformance, which could result in warnings, for which separate procedures, including the right of representation, are available. Managers should not therefore wait for a PDR meeting to discuss serious concerns over performance, as these should be dealt with as they occur.

### **Who should take the lead in introducing the review process?**

Commitment towards introducing the review process needs to come from the Faculty/School/Service Senior Management team, or equivalent, in conjunction with the HR team. The Faculty Senior Management team will have sufficient latitude, if required, to revise the process, within the agreed Framework, to meet any specific local needs, in consultation with the Director of HR. The HoDs will be responsible for managing the PDR process within their respective departments and ensuring that it is undertaken.

### **What happens to existing schemes?**

Existing schemes may continue to be used where they are in line with, or adapted to fit, the Framework Principles for the new PDR scheme. The HR Advisers can advise on transition from existing schemes to the new scheme, where it is felt that this is the

appropriate course of action. All schemes must, however, be called Performance & Development Review (PDR) and be undertaken on an annual basis.

### **What documentation should be completed?**

PDR is not intended to be a 'form filling' exercise. The most important part of the process is the dialogue between reviewer and reviewee. The paperwork is there to support the process by helping in the preparation and providing a record of the subsequent discussions. (Example forms are provided on the PDR webpages within Staff Development)

Differing views have been expressed by managers and staff representatives, in relation to the example forms, with some questioning the need to have different forms for the different staff groups, whilst others do not think that a "one size fits all" approach is appropriate.

Consequently, a number of example forms have been provided. These forms may be adapted as required and are designed to be completed electronically. However, the substance should remain the same, since this reflects the core principles set out in these guidelines. There is also scope for the development of other relevant tools and the HR and Staff Development Advisers will be able to advise on these. It should be noted that the purpose of the forms is to support the process, not govern it and they should not detract from the quality of the discussion.

Also included with the model scheme documentation, is a pro-forma for recording individual Personal Development Plans. The following forms are attached at the end of these guidance notes:-

- *Individual Preparation Form - Academic and Research staff*
- *Individual Preparation Form - Academic related staff (ie Grades 6 and above)*
- *Individual Preparation Form - Support Staff*

*(N.b. The above forms are not intended to be prescriptive, but to help individuals reflect fully, in preparation for the review meeting)*

- *Report form Academic and Research staff*
- *Report form Academic related staff*
- *Report form Support Staff*

*(These forms are intended to help record a summary of the key points of the discussion and agreed actions)*

- *Personal Development Plan*

*(Provides a record of agreed development needs)*

### **Who should conduct the PDR?**

Normally PDRs will be undertaken by the responsible manager/HoD, or where that person has responsibility for a large number of colleagues (ie over 12), another colleague, usually senior to the reviewee. In the case of academic departments, many HoDs will have responsibility for a large number of colleagues. In such cases

other appropriate senior academics may be required to assist as Reviewers. Discussion should take place with an individual to agree the most appropriate Reviewer.

It is important that the Reviewers have the confidence of Reviewees and have the relevant authority regarding resourcing issues. Where there is disagreement as to who should be the Reviewer this should be referred to the appropriate Dean/COO, as appropriate.

The Faculty/School Senior Management team, or equivalent in support services, may also wish to seek advice from its HR Adviser, in determining appropriate arrangements in their respective areas of responsibility.

The outcomes of the annual PDR, including progress against agreed objectives and involvement in any agreed development or training activities, should be followed up at regular intervals, ideally quarterly. Having such an ongoing dialogue, which will be informal in nature, is consistent with good management practice. Ultimately the frequency and format of follow up discussions is a matter of judgement for the Reviewer, who should discuss and agree this with the individual concerned.

### **What is the 'Grandparent' role?**

In a line management structure, where the Reviewer is the Reviewee's manager, the 'Grandparent' would normally be the manager's manager. However, in academic departments, where the agreed Reviewer is another senior academic, the 'Grandparent' role is likely to be the HoD. The 'Grandparent' will sign off the forms, but will also have an important role in assisting to resolve any conflict or disagreement between Reviewer and Reviewee, should that arise.

### **What areas should the annual PDR cover?**

The annual PDR should concentrate on:

- performance in relation to the objectives, targets and circumstances over the previous 12 months
- continuous improvement of future performance to the mutual benefit of the individual and the institution
- seeking to reach agreement on these issues

It should:

- acknowledge strengths
- identify relevant development or training needs
- identify any issues that appear to hinder individual, team or University performance
- facilitate and support the reviewee

### **What about employee 'well-being'?**

It is acknowledged that staff already work very hard and PDRs will provide a useful opportunity to identify and address issues of excessive workload and stress, with referral through other support arrangements, if appropriate.

It is important that Reviewers do not try to address issues outside of their remit and competence. For example if the Reviewee raises issues about health related

matters, then advice may be sought from Occupational Health. Advice on other issues may also be sought from HR Advisers and the Director of HR.

### **What will be the outcomes of the annual PDR?**

The PDR should produce the following, which should be documented:

- Agreed summary of recent achievements (i.e. since last review, where appropriate)
- Agreed targets/objectives for the next period clearly linked to operational plans with agreed support identified, where appropriate
- Agreed learning/development objectives and methods, (and any resources related to these) through which these objectives can be met

Taken together, the outcomes of the review will inform the staff development plan at the Departmental, School and/or Faculty level. The review may also identify weaknesses in the organisation of operations, at any level within the University, which appear to be hindering individual or collective performance.

### **Should the Job Description be discussed?**

This depends on the nature of the job and how long the postholder has been in post. For some staff, a current job description may be included in the discussion, which may include agreed suggestions for revision, to ensure that it accurately reflects the current duties and responsibilities of the post.

### **What about the identification of Development needs?**

The need for development should be seen as an important means to further enhance performance. A key element in the PDR process is the creation of development plans. Development activities identified through the PDR process are likely to fall into the following categories:

- Development needs so that the individual can achieve their work objectives
- Development needs so that an individual can improve their performance from a position of achievement
- Development needs identified so that an individual can achieve their career aspirations

Development needs should be identified by the Reviewee and their Reviewer. There should be agreement over the development needs and the reason for them.

It is important to remember that development is far broader than attending training courses. The University has significantly extended the availability of development opportunities through: mentoring; coaching; job shadowing; secondments; on-line learning and personal development courses. (see Staff Development webpages)

### **Will the outcomes be confidential?**

Completed reviews will normally be confidential between the Reviewee, Reviewer and the relevant senior manager ('Grandparent' role). The Dean/Head of Dept/Senior Manager ('Grandparent') will be responsible for signing off reviews carried out within their area of responsibility and conciliating if there should be any significant disagreements between the Reviewer and Reviewee.

Staff development needs will need to be consolidated and more widely disseminated to inform the staff development process.

For academic staff, the Personal Research Plans (PRPs) will be separated and more widely disseminated through the University's agreed PRP process. It is important, therefore, that Reviewers, Reviewees and the "Grandparent" ensure that the PDR documentation is not circulated with the PRP documentation and that the confidentiality of the PDR process is preserved.

#### **What if agreement is not reached in the PDR?**

All outcomes of the review should be agreed by Reviewer and Reviewee. Since the objective is to be helpful and constructive, disputes between Reviewer and Reviewee should be rare. However, in the event of serious disagreement, there must be a procedure for resolution, which in the first instance will normally be through the ('Grandparent')/Head of Dept. Any failure to reach agreement should be noted in the record form.

#### **What if things go wrong and there is a breakdown in the relationship between Reviewer and Reviewee?**

In the unlikely event of something going seriously wrong between the Reviewer and Reviewee, either party (or both) may seek advice from the "Grandparent" who will seek to help resolve the difficulties. In the rare occasion where the issue cannot be resolved, the Grandparent may agree to a change of Reviewer. Advice may also be sought, confidentially, from an HR Adviser.

#### **What training will be necessary in preparation for the review?**

The Staff Development Advisers, supported by the HR Advisers, will provide training for Reviewers. This will include sessions for those managers and potential Reviewers, who have little or no experience of undertaking PDRs, as well as refresher sessions for those with some experience. PDR training needs should be discussed, in the first instance, with either the appropriate Human Resources Adviser, or the Staff Development Advisers.

The training will be available both through open courses and specific training within departments. In addition, e-learning programmes are being developed

Training for staff on getting the most from their PDRs will be offered through Staff Development and will include on-line learning as well as coverage in the Induction programme. In order to help ensure a fair and equitable process, the training will also cover relevant aspects of Equality and Diversity.

#### **How should we respond to a colleague who might be reluctant to participate?**

Participating in the PDR process will result in an individual receiving feedback, understanding his/her contribution to the University's goals and having a Personal Development Plan; it is anticipated that this will be a constructive, positive and useful experience and that staff will therefore be comfortable to be involved in the process. Participation in the PDR process is a requirement for all post-probation staff, however, where colleagues are hesitant, support will be available through the HR

Advisers and Staff Development Advisers, as well as trade union representatives, where appropriate, to help overcome any obstacles to participation. The PDR process is applicable to all staff, post probation.

### **Will the results be used to inform decisions about discretionary pay?**

There is no direct link between PDR and pay progression, but there will inevitably be some overlap in the sense that there shouldn't be any conflicting outcomes/assessments relating to the two processes. Decisions regarding the discretionary elements of pay progression are subject to agreed review processes.

### **How does PDR relate to the process of PRP for Academic staff?**

There is no reason why the process of PRP cannot be incorporated into the PDR process and if required, recorded separately. This already happens successfully in some departments and it should be the aim in all departments to bring these processes together over the course of time, as this will avoid duplication..

### **How does the scheme relate to Promotion Procedures for Academic staff?**

The PDR process is separate from formal promotion procedures for academic staff, including advancement, confirmation, or renewal of appointments. It is not appropriate therefore, for any document that is used within the PDR process to be incorporated directly into applications for promotion. However the following links can be made:-

- Discussions held as part of a PDR relating to what an individual has achieved, could, for example, provide useful indications on suitability for promotion, but will, of course depend on whether the Reviewer is present;
- Career development discussions that may take part in the PDR may touch upon promotion aspirations
- It is reasonable for the Reviewee to volunteer information from the PDR in support of their promotion case, although it would not be appropriate to append copies of the PDR record forms to an application for promotion.

To be effective, it is important that feedback provided in the PDR is open, honest and constructive.

### **How does PDR relate to the Workload Model for academic staff?**

The workload model is a process applicable to all academic staff and may be a topic that the Reviewee wishes to be discussed within the PDR, in which case it will be their responsibility to provide a copy to their Reviewer.

### **How does the scheme relate to Disciplinary and Sickness Absence/Capability Procedures?**

PDRs should be constructive and supportive, aimed at assisting the development of the Reviewee. They should not be confused with disciplinary or sickness absence/capability procedures for which entirely separate arrangements exist.

### **How should the successful implementation of the PDR scheme be evaluated?**

HoDs/HoSs have overall responsibility for ensuring that reviews are carried out effectively in their areas of responsibility.

Managers will not be required to submit returns centrally to verify that PDRs have taken place, but staff will be asked through the Staff Survey if they have had a PDR in the previous 12 month period.

A review of the effectiveness of the PDR scheme will be undertaken after 12 months, in consultation with the trade union representatives, through the joint negotiation/consultation arrangements. This review will include consideration of any evidence of equality and diversity issues relevant to the Equality Impact Assessment for the PDR process.

## **Part 3**

### **Guidance on Conducting a PDR Meeting**

A PDR meeting begins with the preparation for the meeting and both the Reviewer and the individual member of staff (Reviewee) have a responsibility to prepare properly.

#### Reviewee Preparation

Individuals may wish to use the Individual Preparation Form and should consider the following points in preparation for their PDR meeting:

- what they have achieved during the PDR period, with examples and evidence.
- explanations for objectives that will have and have not been achieved
- what they enjoy most about their job and how they might want to develop their role
- any aspect of their work in which improvement is required and how this might be achieved
- their learning and development needs, with arguments to support the case for specific training
- the level of support and guidance they require from their manager
- their aspirations for the future, both in terms of their current role and in relation to possible future roles
- possible objectives for the forthcoming year.

#### Reviewer Preparation

Reviewers should consider the following in preparation for the PDR meetings

- how well the reviewee has performed since the last meeting
- the extent to which any agreed development plans from the last meeting have been progressed
- the feedback to be given at the meeting and the evidence that will be used to support it
- the factors which have affected performance both within and outside the Reviewee's control
- possible directions the Reviewee's career might take
- possible objectives for the next PDR period

#### Conduct of the PDR Meeting

The PDR meeting should be held in an environment which is private and free from interruptions. A good PDR meeting is one in which:

- the Reviewee does most of the talking
- the Reviewer listens actively to what the Reviewee says
- there is scope for reflection and analysis
- performance is analysed – not personality
- the whole period is reviewed, not just recent or isolated events

- achievements are recognised and reinforced
- ends positively with agreed action plans

In order to conduct a successful PDR, Reviewers need to be able to:

- ask open and probing questions
- avoid making assumptions about what the Reviewee wants or needs
- treat Reviewees as individuals and with respect
- listen actively by:
  - concentrating on the speaker and being aware of behaviour and body language that supplements the verbal messages
  - responding quickly, where necessary, without interrupting
  - asking relevant questions, to clarify meaning
  - demonstrate understanding by commenting on key points, where appropriate
- provide appropriate feedback by:
  - relating it to actual events, observed behaviours or actions
  - describing events without judging them
  - asking the Reviewee's opinion as to why certain events have occurred
  - encouraging Reviewees to come to their own conclusions about what happened and why
  - understanding anything that may have gone wrong and how to put it right, rather than criticising past behaviour

These skills and abilities can and should be, developed through training and development, so that all Reviewers have a consistent understanding of the skills required to undertake a PDR.

### **Other Key Points**

- Objectives should be agreed and SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic, time-bound)
- Development needs and proposed solutions should be realistic and affordable.
- Development needs should be collated on a departmental basis and communicated to the Staff Development Team. Individual development plans should not be forwarded.
- Care should be taken to avoid committing to training expenditure before suitable approval, permission or availability has been confirmed. Raising false hopes, or ignoring unrealistic expectations, is not helpful to the process.
- The review is a two-way process. Comments, positive and negative, will pass in both directions and each party needs to be sensitive to the other party, if the review is to be successful; however, no long-term benefit will ensue from a failure to confront differences.

- Records should be kept in an agreed format and retained by the responsible manager, with a copy given to the Reviewee. It is not a paper led process. Paperwork is to support process, not vice versa

The manager's manager (grandparent role) will oversee the process, signing off the record and resolving any dispute between the Reviewee and the Reviewer.

### **PDR is an on-going process**

PDR should not be an annual meeting where the Reviewee and Reviewer struggle to think what objectives they set 12 months ago actually meant and what they have been doing for the last 12 months. Instead, it should be an on-going process which involves regular discussion between the individual and their Reviewer. These can be formal or informal meetings, but their outcome should be recorded. The benefit of this approach is:

- Reviewers and Reviewees can monitor progress of achievement and can put contingency plans in place to deal with difficulties in achieving objectives.
- During the year, situations may arise which mean that the demands on an individual and team change, thus changing their objectives. By meeting regularly, these changes can easily be incorporated into PDR.
- Learning & development needs can be addressed in a timely manner through regular PDRs
- Issues of unsatisfactory performance can be addressed quickly and easily without necessarily needing to resort to formal procedures.

At the end of the year, a final formal PDR meeting needs to be held to summarise the achievements of the last year and to set the objectives for the forthcoming year. If the monitoring process has been conducted during the year, then preparation time will be reduced and there should be no surprises.