

## ***For staff in grades 1-2***

### **1 Purpose**

The Development and Performance Review is an opportunity for staff to receive feedback on their performance, to discuss and set objectives for the coming year, and to explore and support their career aspirations. It aims to help staff reach their full potential by ensuring that individuals' objectives and activities are aligned with those of the institution, and by supporting individuals in advancing their careers through learning and development.

### **2 Principles**

The scheme is straightforward and built around three key objectives:

- A two-way review of effective how well an employee is doing their job.
- Setting goals for the coming year in the context of the department's strategy and needs, and the aspirations of the reviewee.
- A discussion of broader career aims, and plans for supporting the professional development and career aspirations of the staff member.

### **3 An effective SDPR will have the following qualities:**

- 3.1.1 Leads to meaningful outcomes, with a clear responsibility to take action in pursuit of opportunities for development and job performance.
- 3.1.2 A regular part of normal business, with reviews between annual meetings.
- 3.1.3 Constructive and honest feedback in both directions.
- 3.1.4 Discussions include what was done and the way it was done. The conversation concerns behaviours as well as tasks, and whether due regard was paid to underpinning values such as valuing diversity, working safely, provision of excellent service and demonstrating good teamwork.
- 3.1.5 Objectives are achievable but challenging: they should be the things that are the benchmarks of a job well done. Nobody should feel afraid to set ambitious targets, as long as the subsequent review considers any external factors that have had an impact on whether or not the targets were achievable. Some objectives may be to continue effectively performing part of your role, rather than changing or doing something new. Some may have a target time shorter than the year, or may be part of a much longer plan.
- 3.1.6 Mutual ownership of the process: both reviewer and reviewee have a responsibility to follow up the actions planned and, where appropriate, ensure that the necessary

resources are available.

## **3.2 Links to other University policies and processes**

- 3.2.1 All staff who have completed probation are required to take part in SDPR. Departments should fit the timing of SDPRs with their annual business cycle, but should ensure that all SDPRs are recorded promptly in the iTrent database.
- 3.2.2 Employees should normally undertake their first SDPR no more than 6 months after the end of their probation period, referring to objectives set during their end probation review. This interval may vary to fit the reviewing cycle of the department but nobody should have to wait for an SDPR more than 12 months after the end of probation.
- 3.2.3 SDPR is not part of the probation, promotion or disciplinary procedures. Performance will be discussed in a positive way in the SDPR. The focus should be on achievements and looking for ways of helping and developing reviewees to perform even better, but also ways of positively addressing areas of difficulty. Separate processes exist for dealing with significant performance problems, discipline and grievance, and for rewarding exceptional contribution. SDPR is not the occasion to raise performance issues for the first time: there should be no surprises in an SDPR meeting if normal good management communication is going on through the year.
- 3.2.4 Nominations under the Contribution Pay Scheme (comprising both Recognising Excellence and Outstanding Contribution schemes) will only be considered for staff who have taken part in a SDPR or SDPR+ for the preceding year (August to July). This SDPR must have been logged in iTrent
- 3.2.5 Reviewers are not in a position to make any commitments about promotion or job moves. However, the review meeting should include discussion of the reviewee's career and how s/he is positioned with respect to planning next steps in seeking another job or promotion.
- 3.2.6 For part-time staff, the number and scope of objectives set and development plans should be proportionate to the part-time nature of the role. Staff on fractional contracts (less than 0.2FTE) may wish to take a lighter-touch approach, but should nevertheless have a regular annual discussion about performance and development which is logged in iTrent.

## **4 Process**

### **4.1 Assigning reviewers**

- 4.1.1 Heads of Department are responsible for assigning reviewees to appropriate reviewers.
- 4.1.2 Reviewers will normally be the line manager or supervisor. Where appropriate, for example where a member of staff has more than one manager, staff members may request to be reviewed by someone who is not their main line manager, provided that the reviewer is sufficiently familiar with their work and has received appropriate training.
- 4.1.3 Reviewers should not normally be assigned more than 8 reviewees in any cycle.
- 4.1.4 Training is available both for reviewers and reviewees to get the most out of the SDPR. All reviewers are required to have attended appropriate training before undertaking SDPR.

## **4.2 Preparation**

More detailed guidance on the practicalities will be provided in training sessions, backed up by on-line resources. The general process is:

- 4.2.1 Both the reviewer and reviewee should check their understanding of the principles and processes of SDPR, and the reviewer should make sure that the reviewee has the relevant documents and that they have adequate in-work time to complete the process.
- 4.2.2 The reviewee reflects on their year and completes the “Self Review” form, which is then passed to the reviewer.
- 4.2.3 The reviewer should also complete the brief “Manager Review” form, which will be shared with the reviewee before or during the meeting. (The reviewer should judge which is more appropriate).
- 4.2.4 Reviewer and reviewee should be honest about perceived strengths and weaknesses and consider ways in which strengths can be built on and ways in which training and development can be provided where there are weaknesses.

## **4.3 The review meeting**

- 4.3.1 The conversation in the review meeting is the heart of the SDPR process. A rich and comprehensive discussion is essential and much more significant in achieving success than the paperwork.
- 4.3.2 The discussion must take into account the concerns and wishes of both reviewee and reviewer. It will vary according to the nature of the job. It should be possible to raise any matters of concern on either side, there should not be topics which are “no go” areas. There should also be no significant surprises; both positive feedback about good work, and concerns about poor performance, should have arisen as part of the year’s normal business.
- 4.3.3 SDPR is not just a once a year meeting. For the process to be successful, plans which are agreed at the review meeting need to be monitored and updated throughout the year. It will help to set a date to review progress, at least at the mid-year point.
- 4.3.4 The review meeting concludes with agreement about what to enter on the “SDPR Grades 1-2” form, which records general conclusions about performance, and plans

for the future. This is the form that is then uploaded to iTrent as a permanent record by the line manager. The self-review and manager review sheets should not be uploaded.

#### 4.4 Setting objectives

- 4.4.1 In the large majority of cases, objectives will be set by mutual agreement. The reviewee's job description, and the needs of the department, are the context from which performance goals should be set. For example, a department may have a particular focus on customer service which should influence goals for the year ahead.
- 4.4.2 Where no agreement can be reached, the reviewer should stipulate the expected performance objectives for the year.
- 4.4.3 Both reviewee and reviewer should be aware that they are the only people in a position to commit to any action entered in the "actions" column. Naturally, some objectives may be conditional on external factors, but successful SDPR relies on reviewee and, in some cases, reviewer following through on commitments made in the meeting.

#### 4.5 Development plans

- 4.5.1 Learning and development plans should be focused on enhancing the knowledge, skills and behaviours that the reviewee will need to be effective in their role or future roles.
- 4.5.2 Development plans should be as clearly defined as performance objectives in terms of timescales, actions and outcomes.
- 4.5.3 Learning happens in many ways and the plans should consider not just formal training courses, but other forms of learning such as taking on new types of work, joining other teams, job shadowing, secondments, and challenging assignments.

#### 4.6 Confidentiality

- 4.6.1 The review *meeting* is a protected space in which the participants can freely discuss performance and career issues, and should remain confidential to the participants. The *recorded outcomes* are confidential to the participants, the senior reviewer and others in the reviewee's management line. The reviewee may choose to release the record of the meeting to nominated third parties – for example Trades Unions representatives - to raise awareness or request resolution of issues arising in the discussion.
- 4.6.2 In discussing the development needs of a department, as management teams or with the staff development function, senior reviewers and Heads of Department should be sensitive to individuals' desire for anonymity. There should not normally be any need to discuss performance issues, identifiable with individuals, in these circumstances.
- 4.6.3 The Department of Human Resources will report annually to heads of department on participation in the SDPR in their area, and managers can run an iTrent report of SDPR completions in their area at any time.

## 4.7 Scrutiny and oversight

- 4.7.1 Effective staff review systems rely on a “grandparent principle,” by which the completed review forms are viewed by a senior member of the department, usually the reviewer’s line manager, referred to as a Senior Reviewer. This aims to:
- Ensure that the process is completed regularly and on time
  - Provide scrutiny of the quality of the process; the senior reviewer can make a judgement about whether the comments recorded and objectives set are reasonable and fair in the context of the department and the reviewee’s work.
  - Provide a way of collating the overall development needs of the department, for consideration by the Head of Department when preparing their operational plan.
- 4.7.2 As the reviewer is accountable for the quality of the review process, the Senior Reviewer does not need to authorise the submission of completed documents. Where there are doubts about the conduct of the process, the senior reviewer should provide feedback to the reviewer and reviewee and request further explanation, and where appropriate should report to the Head of Department. Only in exceptional circumstances would a Senior Reviewer recommend that finalised SDPR outcomes are unacceptable and request that they be rewritten.
- 4.7.3 Senior Reviewers will not be automatically alerted to the logging of a completed SDPR in iTrent, although it is expected that whoever uploads the completed form sends them an email. Departments should therefore ensure that their internal SDPR routine includes reminders to relevant managers to fulfil their Senior Reviewer roles.
- 4.7.4 Senior Reviewers use their own iTrent Manager Self Service access to view the documents (uploaded reviews can be viewed by anyone higher in the reviewee’s reporting line.)
- 4.7.5 As the Head of Department is accountable for the performance and development of all staff, it is good practice to ensure that reviewers have a chance to discuss the departmental context to SDPR, and the general lessons learned in the discussions, both before and after the reviews are carried out.