Performance Development Discussion

Developing your skills – for the appraiser and the appraisee
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Performance Development Discussion (PDD) Process

In introducing the PDD Process in May 2016 the Vice Chancellor Paul Boyle stated.....

'In our Strategic Plan we committed to making our approach to appraisal transparent, understandable and fair. With this aim in mind we are launching a new approach to appraisal-Performance Development Discussion (PDD)....

It is vitally important that we recognise all colleagues’ contributions, which are made in many different ways.....

Furthermore, an effective performance development process is needed if we are to achieve the transformation we wish to bring to our University...’

The PDD Process is...

..............a formal opportunity for all members of staff to receive feedback on their performance and development activities, to discuss current workload, agree objectives for the coming year in line with departmental/divisional objectives and wider institutional objectives, and consider appropriate developmental activities to support those objectives.

Within a wider context, PDD is a part of the University Strategic Plan, which commits to making the approach to appraisal transparent, understandable and fair; an effective process to achieve the transformation to the University with regard to realising discovery-led teaching and research, and discovery-enabling culture and environment; and a means by which colleagues’ contributions can be recognised.

The PDD is a supportive and constructive two-way conversation between the appraisee and appraiser, involving reflection on the work of the past year, what is happening at the moment, and aspirations for the future. It will be supported by more informal discussions during the year.

Within the academic community it is the primary (but certainly not sole) opportunity for academic members of staff to indicate interest in applying for study leave, merit awards and promotion, and to express interest in undertaking new types of work (e.g. an interest in administrative/leadership roles). Please consult the University of Leicester Academic Career Map for guidance.

Benefits

We all want to do a good job. To enable us to do this we need to know what we are aiming for and how well we are currently doing. In order to have clarity we need an opportunity to sit down, think and reflect for ourselves and thence with a person who can offer us support and guidance.

The PDD is not the ‘responsibility’ of the appraiser or of the appraisee; it is a joint, positive and constructive conversation that enables the appraiser and the appraisee to talk openly.
The benefits of a PDD are to:

- allow appraisers/managers to acknowledge and give recognition for appraisees achievements by giving feedback to appraisees
- enable appraisees to discuss what they have achieved against any previously agreed objectives
- allow appraisees to discuss future work aspirations
- enable appraisees/appraisers to identify strengths and areas that could be built upon to improve opportunities for the future
- allow appraisees/appraisers/managers to identify, agree and plan training and development needs
- provide appraiser/manager with an opportunity to address difficulties and problems that the appraisee may have raised

This will enable appraisees to:

- understand how what they do fits in to the bigger picture with the strategic aims and values of the University
- Have the opportunity to discuss and contribute to team, department and college aims and objectives
- Be clearer about what is expected of them
- Be supported by the University to learn and develop in order to meet these expectations
- Be able to discuss and find joint solutions to barriers that may emerge such as time, resources, management and relationships
- Think and plan for any wider career aspirations

**Developing Your Skills**

Key skills will help you during the PDD process. These include:

- Objective Setting
- Effective Questioning
- Effective Listening
- Giving and Receiving Feedback

These skills are useful whether you are a manager/appraiser or an appraisee.

In this guidance booklet we will explore some of the ways you can develop and use these skills during the PDD process.
Objective Setting

Objective setting is a key element of a good PDD.

Objectives are defined by a beginning and end point; they go beyond the day-to-day tasks and describe a result linked to achieving a particular goal at individual, departmental, divisional or college level. They are a clear statement of something that needs to be accomplished by a specific end date.

It is good to aim for between five and seven objectives, however this will depend on the complexity of your role.

As an appraisee objectives should be set for both performance within your current role and for your personal development.

For the manager/appraiser, objectives provide an opportunity to stretch and develop an individual within the team, and help to achieve departmental objectives.

Carefully considered objectives can result in a win-win situation for both an appraisee and a manager/appraiser.

When you are writing objectives, try to make them:

- **Specific** - clear about what and how
- **Simple** - about one thing, not lots together
- **Attainable** - within your sphere of influence

**Specific**

A specific objective is clear and easy to understand. It describes a concrete commitment to action. It can help to use strong action verbs rather than ambiguous ones.

**Good example**

I will update the new system with the 2012 data by the last working day in July.

**Bad example**

I will ensure that the new system is up to date.

**Further examples of action verbs:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong action verbs</th>
<th>Ambiguous action verbs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduce</td>
<td>Ensure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>Contribute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement</td>
<td>Facilitate</td>
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</table>
Simple
A simple objective refers to one, clear commitment.

Good example
I will report on recommendations arising from the student consultation in a project to the project board by the end of August.

Bad example
I will design and implement the service delivery component of the international student initiative; considering the service delivery for each department and each division, benchmarking, reporting on progress, and delivery on each of pre-set milestones considering aspects of funding and budget allocation.

Attainable
Objectives express individual accountabilities. You can be held accountable for completing a task provided you are in a position to do it.

Good example
Design a procedure that reduces the complexity of the student recruitment process and supports the University target to increase student recruitment numbers by 2% in the next two years.

Bad example
Ensure that the University increases student recruitment numbers by 2% in the next two years.

SMART Objective setting...
SMART objectives enable clarity around expectations whilst focussing on defining measurable outcomes and not outputs.

Agreeing SMART objectives has benefits for both a manager/appraiser and for an appraisee. As an appraiser/manager you have a clear understanding about what direction your appraisees’, will be following over the coming year. As an appraisee you have total clarity on the direction and the development that you may require to achieve your objectives and ultimately your goals.

Performance objectives should be set using the SMART method:
### SMART Objective setting in more detail.....

| **Specific** | The action, behaviour or outcome must be linked to a rate, number, percentage or frequency. For example ‘Answer the telephone quickly’ is not specific and allows for a subjective judgement to be made about whether the outcome has been achieved. In contrast, ‘answer the telephone within 3 rings’ is. |
| **Measurable** | You must be able to measure the extent to which an objective has been achieved. If you’ve successfully created a specific objective linked to a rate, number, percentage or frequency, this will be easier. |
| **Achievable** | Put simply, an objective is achievable if, with a reasonable amount of effort and application, it can be achieved. Deciding what constitutes a realistic amount of effort and application calls for a subjective judgement to be made, which is one reason why objectives should be mutually agreed, and not ‘set’. |
| **Relevant** | This means that the outcome sought must be something the individual can actually impact upon. The key questions here are: Does the individual have the necessary knowledge, skill and authority to complete this objective? |
| **Timebound** | This means quite simply: Is there a timeframe within which the objective should be undertaken? If there is no timeframe, the objective is not SMART. |

Personal development objectives should be set to consolidate or broaden performance in a current role or to prepare an appraisee deemed to have the ability to move to another role to do so. All objectives should be traceable to contributing to the departmental and institutional strategic objectives, either directly or indirectly.
Helping to set objectives by using the GROW Model

If, as an appraiser, your appraisee is struggling with identifying SMART Objectives, it can be useful to use the GROW model to structure your discussion. This is a model that is one of the most used models to structure a coaching or developmental conversation.

It can be used to help teams and individuals improve performance, their decision making, solve problems and learn new skills.

GROW is an acronym:

- Goal
- Current Reality
- Options
- Will (or Way Forward)

The key to using the GROW model is all about asking great questions. The GROW model is used in coaching to help people come up with their own answers, it is about asking the right question at the right time.

Questions can be categorized within the framework of the four-step GROW model:

**Goal:**

The GROW model starts with establishing a goal. It could be a performance goal, a developmental goal, a problem to solve or a decision to make.

**Eight possible questions designed to help someone gain clarity on their goal(s):**

1. What goal do you want to achieve?
2. What would you like to happen with ______?
3. What do you really want?
4. What would you like to accomplish?
5. What result are you trying to achieve?
6. What outcome would be ideal?
7. Why are you hoping to achieve this goal?
8. What would the benefits be if you achieved this goal?

**Reality:**

This step in the GROW model helps you and your appraisee gain awareness of the current situation.

The key is to take it slowly with your questions – you need to allow for thinking time. Let the appraisee think about the question and reflect on his or her answers.

**Eight possible questions designed to clarify the current reality:**
1. What is happening now (what, who, when, and how often)?
2. Have we already taken any steps towards the goal?
3. Where are the team now in relation to the goal?
4. On a scale of one to ten where are we now from achieving it?
5. What have you contributed to the success of the team so far?
6. What progress have we made so far?
7. What is working well right now?
8. Do you know what is required of you?

**Options:**

Once you both have a clear understanding of the situation, the coaching conversation turns to what the appraisee needs to do to reach their goal.

**Eight questions designed to help the appraisee explore options and/or generate solutions:**

1. What are the options?
2. What do you think you need to do next?
3. What could be your first step?
4. What do you think you need to do to get a better result (or closer to your goal)?
5. Who else might be able to help?
6. What would happen if you did nothing?
7. What has worked for you already? How could you do more of that?
8. If anything was possible, what would you do?

**Will, or Way Forward:**

This is the last step in the GROW model. In this step, the manager/appraiser checks for commitment and helps the team establish a clear action plan for next steps.

**Eight questions to help probe for and achieve commitment:**

1. How are you going to do that?
2. How will you know when you have done it?
3. What obstacles are getting in the way of success?
4. What resources can help you?
5. When are you going to start?
6. How will you know you have been successful?
7. What support do you need to get that done?
8. What do you need from me/others to help you achieve this?

Structuring the discussion in this way will help the appraisee form goals or objectives that can then be developed into SMART objectives.
Effective Questioning Skills

As a manager/appraiser and as an appraisee, being able to ask appropriate questions is an essential skill. It allows you to elicit the information you want, seek guidance or clarity and confirm what has been agreed. Whether you are looking to create the right atmosphere to get someone to open up, or whether you are trying to open up a discussion, this guidance will cover the main types of questions you can use to good effect, along with some top tips for asking questions.

Helpful questions

Open questions

I keep six honest serving men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

Rudyard Kipling

Open questions, as the name suggests, 'open up' areas in which you are interested in finding out information, but allow a range of possible replies. They are useful to begin with; they put the person you are speaking to at ease because they are not too demanding and they enable areas to be identified which may be investigated further at a later stage in the discussion. If you are looking to gain clarity on what is expected of you these questions will also help.

Examples of open questions

• How are you feeling?
• How do you think the last few months have gone?
• What do you think about the objectives we agreed for this year?
• Which parts of your job are you happiest with?
• What would you like me to achieve?
• How do you think I should approach this?

Probing questions

Often phrased as statements, probing questions enable you to focus on particular areas that interest you.

Examples of probing questions

• Tell me how you dealt with that request.
• Explain why you spend so much time drafting budget reports.
• Describe what happened to you yesterday.

Probing questions help to obtain specific detailed information and are often used to follow up after open questions.
Reflective/repetitive statements

Although not strictly a question, repetition and reflection can be used to encourage the person you are speaking to say more. Sometimes using a questioning tone of voice is enough. Other times, you may wish to back up your statement with a question, for example:

**Examples of reflective/repetitive statements**

- You say that you like working with people. Can you tell me more about that?
- It sounds like you have a problem with the figures. Would that be fair to say?

Reflective or repetitive statements are extremely useful for obtaining explanations for attitudes and opinions in detail, or to gain a deeper understanding when the person you are speaking to is showing emotions. To be effective in the use of reflection or repetition, you need to listen carefully to what is being said, interpret it accurately and respond accordingly.

Closed questions

Closed questions force the reply towards a precisely defined area and usually elicit a one or two word answer. Closed questions are useful for checking out and confirming facts, or for regaining control of the discussion.

**Examples of closed questions**

- Do you enjoy meeting clients?
- Have you had sufficient training to enable you to produce the report?
- Would you expect me to achieve this in one month?

Summary questions

Like reflective statements, summaries are concerned with interpreting a response, but rather than reflecting emotional content, they concentrate on factual content. Also like reflective statements, they can be backed up with a further question:

**Examples of summary questions**

- So, what you are saying is that, although you enjoy working on the projects, there are some aspects which you find mundane?
- As I understand, you are not happy working in your current role? Would that be accurate?
- So can I clarify that you would expect me to achieve X by Y using Z resource?

Summary questions can be used to review briefly, to summarise, to check your understanding of the facts, or even to clarify the thoughts of the person you are speaking to. Summary questions can also prevent a drift from the purpose of the discussion and allow you to regain control smoothly.
Unhelpful questions

Leading questions

As a manager/appraiser be careful not to ask leading questions. Some people will try to give the answers that they think you want to hear, rather than the answers they would truly give if they had not been influenced in any way.

Examples of Leading questions

- You will be able to produce that report by Friday, won't you?
- I presume you are confident that you’ll have the figures for the 15th of each month?

For a genuinely truthful answer, do not pose leading questions. The questions above can be phrased as non-leading questions by re-wording, as shown below:

Instead try ...

- When will you be able to produce that report by?
- How confident do you feel about getting the figures for the 15th of each month?

Multiple questions

Multiple questions are questions that contain more than one question, for example:

Examples of multiple questions

- How satisfied are you in your role? Is it challenging enough for you? Do you want more responsibility?
- What is the best way of carrying out this project? Is it to start at the beginning? Do you have any idea what we should do first?
- Are you happy with what I am achieving? Am I achieving it in the most effective way possible? Am I using the correct processes and resources?

Multiple questions often confuse the person to whom you have asked the question. People tend not to answer all parts, but usually answer the first or last part and forget the others.

The best way to overcome this is not to ask multiple questions but to ask each question separately, eliciting an answer before posing the next question. Start with open questions and finish with closed.

Multiple questions can also lead people into making false choices, for example 'Do you want more face-to-face contact with clients? Or maybe you would prefer to stay in this department?’ could lead the person to think that there are only two options available. However, there may be other options such as moving department without having more contact with clients. They may even be able to do both, i.e. having more contact with clients while staying in the same department.

Make sure the questions are asked clearly and that all the options are made available when seeking a decision.
Listening Skills – Active Listening

During a discussion it is really important to focus on listening to the answers that the manager/appraiser or the appraisee is giving to you.

You can use active listening to demonstrate to others that you have followed their thoughts, views and opinions. It also shows that you have listened to their ideas and recognised their feelings.

As a manager/appraiser active listening is an ideal way of establishing good rapport and good honest productive communication and by actively listening you can stop yourself reacting to half understood ideas.

Active listening also benefits appraisees’-they feel understood; they have the opportunity to express their thoughts, views and opinions. They’ll also become aware of any misunderstandings and be able to correct them.

Use phrases such as:

So what you’re saying is...
Let me check that I understand....
You sound enthusiastic about....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To listen actively</th>
<th>Listening actively isn’t about</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Give full attention-with your mind and your body</td>
<td>Agreeing or disagreeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect the content</td>
<td>Giving your opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflect the feelings</td>
<td>Giving advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match the energy appropriately</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarise</td>
<td>Interrogating</td>
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</table>

Establishing Rapport

Questioning and Listening

The aim of questioning and listening is to gain an informed understanding of the situation of the person you are speaking to. The more experienced and accomplished you are, the more comfortable you will be at questioning and listening rather than talking. The person you are speaking to is likely to be reassured, if, during your conversation, facts are regularly confirmed, reflected and summarised.

Ask questions in an inquisitive manner and not in a challenging way. Do not show approval or disapproval in your questions - show curiosity and a desire to learn.

Allow the other person some thinking time before they respond - they may not have considered your question before and need time to gather their thoughts. Avoid jumping in to break the silence.

Observe and interpret the details of the other person’s non-verbal signals (gestures, facial expressions, movement of limbs, blinking, coughing) and tone of voice, all of which can reveal their emotional state.
Consider what they seem to be trying to communicate. What can be inferred from the way information is communicated and the words used?

Reflective questions can be helpful for exploring this in more detail.

Finally, remember your own non-verbal signals. Be aware that it is quite natural for us to unconsciously ‘mirror’ or copy another’s body language. Instead, take a moment to check how you are sitting, how calm your hand movements are, your pace of voice etc. Make a conscious effort to maintain an atmosphere of friendly neutrality.

**Giving Feedback**

Feedback is given with the intention of improving or praising what someone is doing. It is information offered by one person to another about how their actions or behaviour impacted on a situation, process, person or outcome. It differs from constructive criticism, which implies a judgement or opinion about a person or their work.

Giving someone information about the impact of their actions allows them to make an informed decision about whether to continue or change what they are doing.

Feedback is most useful within a culture of learning and development. While giving positive feedback is relatively easy, being a manager/appraiser can involve occasions when it is important to give developmental feedback on research, on writing, on team working and on progress in general.

To be helpful, feedback needs to be given in a concerned and supportive way and to include both positive and negative observations. In giving feedback, remember to limit the amount of information you give and allow the receiver time to process it.

**Some things to consider when giving feedback**

| 1. Invite the individual to self-assess | For instance, ‘what do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of your analysis?’ |
| 2. Comment on positives | Give some (genuine) positive feedback as a precursor to any developmental feedback. ‘The slides you used were really clear however the information on one of them was incorrect’ |
| 3. Focus on the behaviour not the person | For instance, ‘I think that the draft you produced needs more thorough editing here, and here’, rather than ‘Your writing is really shoddy.’ |
| 4. Be specific and clear; if possible, suggest concrete ways to make improvements | For instance, ‘The proposed method does not align well with the methodology. Are there studies in the literature that can provide guidance?’ |
| 5. Own the statement | Use ‘I’ statements rather than ‘you’ statements, e.g. ‘I find your description confusing’ rather than ‘you sound confused here’ |
| 6. Don’t wait | Immediate feedback is the most valuable. If this is not possible, give it as soon as you can. Remember if you are referring to something in the past be specific. |
7. Recognize that an immediate response to negative feedback may be defensive.  
Be prepared for these kinds of responses since without addressing them the feedback is unlikely to have much effect.  

**Model for giving feedback**  
A simple model for giving feedback is WIN. This model is used for verbal feedback but can also be useful to provide structure to feedback in the PDD.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W</th>
<th>When you... or what I saw was (NB this should always be observed or evidenced behaviour)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>The impact of this was..... the impact of this on the department was....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Next time how might you.... Next time how could you do that differently?</td>
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**Seeking and receiving feedback**  
Seeking feedback is a useful method to demonstrate how we have undertaken our tasks and responsibilities.  

Receiving feedback helps us to become more aware of what we do and how we do it. It gives us an opportunity to change and modify our ways of working in order to become more effective. Without feedback we will not improve or develop our way of working.  

It is important to consider how to respond to feedback when it is offered whether it is positive or developmental feedback  

**Some things to consider when receiving feedback**  

| 1. Self-assess your ideas and work beforehand | Prepare some specific questions that you want the other person to provide feedback on. |
| 2. Ask for help in finding solutions to the difficulties | For instance, ‘Can you tell me what you think would work better?’ |
| 3. Remember that it is easy not to “hear” feedback, particularly if it’s negative or developmental. | If feedback is given in a positive way then it generally leads to a less defensive response and the receiver can focus on how to improve things or do things differently |
| 4. Remind yourself that all feedback, positive and negative, can be useful. | When you receive positive feedback thank the person who gave you feedback. When receiving negative or developmental feedback consider taking notes so that you can think through the specifics at a later stage. |
| 5. Check that you have fully understood the specifics of the feedback. | For instance, ‘So the main things I should focus on are xxx, yyy, etc.’ This clarification of understanding is particularly important if there needs to be specific developmental activity |