

## **Effective appraisals – supporting the university strategy 2030:**

The University uses self-appraisal as a precursor to the formal appraisal meeting, as it provides a useful means of self-reflection and personal evaluation of past performance. To carry out an effective self-appraisal, it is good practice to consider your accomplishments, particular problems and challenges you have faced, your strengths and weaknesses and how your role could be developed in the future. If you are about to conduct a self-appraisal, or want to review the effectiveness of your current approach, here is some advice to ensure that the process is well planned and carried out objectively and honestly.

- 1. Check your understanding:** To ensure that the self-appraisal process is meaningful you should have an understanding of both your role and the process to be followed during the appraisal period. Make sure that you have a clear appreciation of your responsibilities, your performance objectives and priorities as well as those of your manager's and the university's expectations. It is also important that you are familiar with the University's appraisal process.
- 2. Plan ahead:** As with any appraisal process, it is important to plan ahead and conduct adequate preparations so that the process is both valid and robust. Ideally, you should reflect back on your performance over a period of time, and draw upon a range of examples from throughout the appraisal period. It is useful to use the Horizon check-in review, where you can regularly note your thoughts and reflections on particular tasks, issues and challenges while information is fresh in your mind. Get into the habit of updating your records on a regular basis rather than waiting until the end of the evaluation period.
- 3. Collect evidence of your performance:** Don't expect your manager to remember everything you've accomplished over the course of the appraisal period. It is useful to keep records of feedback (both positive and negative) received from colleagues, students and managers. File thank-you emails and letters, notes about any training you have completed and certificates awarded. Keep records of any special assignments, projects or tasks you were involved in that gave you an opportunity to develop new skills, or which gave you exposure to new processes and procedures. It is also important to document any significant changes to your responsibilities, performance objectives and work priorities – these can be attached or updated on Horizon Talent under *Career and Performance*.

- 4. Honesty:** Although it might be tempting, don't be swayed into overstating or understating your achievements. It is also important to be honest about your strengths and weaknesses. Although it might be difficult at first, being able to describe your failures or where things went wrong can be a valuable learning experience. If you were not able to meet some of your performance goals, or have faced particular problems, consider what the root causes were and assess your performance objectively and truthfully.
- 5. Be specific:** To increase the validity of your self-appraisal, provide examples of tasks and situations, and outline the specific actions you took. Think about the core areas of responsibility that make up your role and how you have performed in each. To help increase objectivity, provide quantitative information in the measure of success within Horizon Talent (under *Career and Performance*). For example "I follow up and resolve all student/staff complaints within one hour", rather than "My customer service skills are good"; "I completed the report in five weeks, one week ahead of schedule" rather than "my work is of high quality". Explain the specific impact of your actions on individual, team and University objectives.
- 6. Be flexible.** Where you have not been able to meet your performance objectives (goals) due to circumstances beyond your control, you should re-evaluate if the objectives are still relevant with your line manager. Where this is the case and you have completed updating the objective in Horizon Talent, you will be able to extend the date of completion of the objectives to a new agreed deadline, which can be in the following appraisal period. This will mean you are fairly assessed against the objectives you have agreed with your manager at the start of the appraisal period. If the goal is no longer relevant you should look to confirm that in your performance write-up.
- 7. Think about the future:** Your views on how you see your role progressing is a critical element of the self-appraisal process. Your self-appraisal should take into account both short and long term goals, as well as considering potential areas of development. Think about your career goals and aspirations, and the areas of your role that you are keen to develop. This can be completed within the career and development area on Horizon.
- 8. Demonstrate your professionalism and attention to detail** by checking your self-appraisal carefully ensuring you have evaluated and demonstrated how you have met the university values.

9. Setting your objectives for the year ahead: An aspect of appraisal self-reflection will be to ensure you are continuing to set SMART objectives: Specific (detailed) Measurable (to a set standard) Achievable (can be done) Relevant (appropriate to the role) Time-bound (with a clear deadline). *We are encouraging staff to align their objectives with those of their line manager, or to set these against one of those listed in the Performance Library on Horizon. In line with the new strategy we are encouraging staff to have fewer objectives (around 2-3 stretch goals depending on their role) which will support the university's priorities.* Operative roles may have fewer opportunities for directly delivering stretch goals, however tasks can be captured on Horizon Talent and these are instrumental in delivering the university ambitions
10. Our university values (Inclusivity, Collaboration and Impactful) have been embedded into Horizon Talent, so you can demonstrate how you achieve these in your role. You should look for opportunities to set future goals with reference to meeting our values as this helps embed our university strategy. Please note your appraisal performance rating is assessed against demonstrating our values.

### 11. Rating:

The university has adopted a five point rating scale:

To support **openness, transparency and fairness**, we are encouraging management teams to hold pre-rating discussions to ensure ratings are applied consistently.

Suggested format:

**Senior management teams to have a discussion** to prepare for ratings – this sets expectations for rating categories based on individual/faculty/directorate performance outcomes, values and behaviours. Application is context specific, but the essential elements are about outcomes which go above and beyond the intended aims and how the individual demonstrated these.

**Manager** to gather information which supports their appraisees – including feedback, and other key information.

**Critically evaluate evidence** - including celebrating successes, and to ratify managers' initial thoughts on the rating. Managers will still be responsible for the rating selected, but by having discussions with others this will help them confirm their decisions.

**Specific individuals should not be** discussed during this process, but a summary of why the spread of ratings will be given will involve discussing the information available to validate personal judgements.

Rating discussions will also encourage managers to **evaluate rating changes**, or those which are very low or high year on year.

Managers will still be responsible for **confirming the final ratings** with their team members and on the system.

## **12. Senior leader's development feedback:**

In addition to the appraisal senior leaders are invited to request feedback from staff via the Horizon Talent system to support their development as part of the appraisal process. This will enable them to consider how they can improve their leadership support of staff.

If you are a staff member providing feedback to a senior leader do consider the following:

- Aim for your feedback to be objective and based on observable behaviour
- Provide feedback when you have time to reflect and can offer balanced guidance
- Feedback is not anonymous therefore be constructive and provide information in the spirit of supporting on-going professional development e.g. if you did more of X this would be helpful for reasons XYZ
- Ensure your feedback is specific using concrete examples. Avoid vague views which are unambiguous and unhelpful
- Remember this is one tool for providing feedback and face to face feedback remains valuable
- In any organisation the role of leader is challenging but a having a culture of giving and receiving can help to create values-led improvements. Be mindful that whilst you may not know the entire context of an

individual's role, your constructive feedback is still valuable within an inclusive, collaborative and impactful workplace

Line manager – incorporating feedback as part of appraisal:

- How, where and when do you plan to give the messages – is the timing and situation appropriate
- How are you feeling about giving feedback
- How might the person receiving the observations react to this feedback
- The language we use when giving feedback can be highly influential in changing behaviour. Choose your words carefully to ensure positive outcomes. Try framing your feedback in positive language whilst acknowledging learning is a process, mastered only through application

Receiving feedback:

- Thank the individual for their feedback and inform those that provide this how you may take the information on board for your development overtime.