

QUESTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS IMPLEMENTING STAFF REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

Function and aims

The University's *Information Sheet* (the A4 letterfold leaflet) sets out the basic framework of the scheme. The challenge for an institution is first to envisage a reasonably natural and helpful process and then to describe it so that it seems natural and helpful to their members. These questions are intended to help.

The wholehearted support of reviewers and staff being reviewed is likely only if a scheme fits the context and respects the values and working relationships within which it operates. The crucial relationships are those of reviewer and member of staff concerned. These relationships differ widely between and within institutions. In some cases the reviewer is a peer of the member of staff: here the reviewer's role is to support and assist a colleague who is reviewing his/her work and career and clarifying his/her own judgements and priorities. At the other end of the spectrum the reviewer is also the person who normally directs the member of staff's work and may decide his/her priorities, training and so on. Schemes need to acknowledge and accommodate these differences, and reviewers need to reflect them sensitively.

The purposes of the University's scheme are to provide a framework for reviewing performance, forming action plans and identifying development needs (See the Information Sheet for additional detail.)

Institutions might also include as aims for their schemes: supporting people in reviewing their work; developing their careers; clarifying the priorities of their work; making plans; identifying their development needs; and clarifying their roles, particularly after changes. If institutions are accommodating a hierarchical relationship between the reviewer and member of staff being reviewed, their version might also aim to ensure that the member of staff knows how the reviewer views his/her work, and to enable the reviewer to appreciate the member of staff's view of his/her own work.

Frequency

How often? Review should be at least every two years, with the first review at the end of the probationary period. Consideration should be given to annual review for short-term staff.

Should there be a follow-up meeting? At what interval?

Identifying reviewers

Who will act as reviewers? (Remember all staff groups.)

How many reviewers will there be?

Allocation of staff to be reviewed (e.g. 8-12 per reviewer)

How many reviews will each reviewer conduct a year? What about sabbaticals?

How will you provide for an alternative reviewer if the member of staff concerned objects to the first choice?

What is the role of the head of institution in addition to taking responsibility for the scheme in the institution?

eg Reviewer?

Reviews records of all reviews?

Samples records to monitor the running of the scheme?

Reviews everyone's/some people's development conclusions?

Reviews everyone's/some people's priorities/aims/plans/goals/objectives/targets?

Receives general conclusions from reviewers at an annual meeting?

Avoiding duplication of effort / ensuring the broadest information

What other processes might inform the review? Appraisal under the NHS scheme? Career Management Scheme for research staff? QAA subject review? RAE? How can staff being reviewed adduce information from those processes? Will that be the normal expectation?

Will staff being reviewed participate in other forms of review or development? A professional body's CPD scheme? HE Academy (formerly ILT) membership? Other accredited activity? How will they be prompted to bring such material into consideration?

Preparation

What preparation will you require of staff being reviewed? Preparation ought to prompt them to list and evaluate their activities during the last review period. Will you ask staff to exchange notes of topics of discussion with reviewers in advance?

Possible frameworks for preparation and discussion include:

CV + roles

Roles might include e.g. research, teaching and administration

Priority activities

Example

Please prepare for the discussion by writing in advance a list of the main tasks of your job together with an estimate of the percentage of working time you spend on each (no items smaller than 5% please). Under each activity write about two lines assessing the progress you have made during the review period. If you feel you are able to form some general or particular aims for the next review period before the discussion, please do so. You may also wish to consider your own development during the forthcoming review period.

The institution's strategic framework

Discussion of member of staff's activity under each programme heading

Objectives of the unit or team

Objectives of member of staff related to those of the unit.

Job description / role profile

Review of key tasks as listed

The Review Discussion

How will the review discussion be structured? Will a standard framework be used? (Exs are available.)

What record will be made of the discussion? (It will also be sensible for arrangements to accommodate staff who prefer not to prepare notes in writing). What will be confidential? What will be disclosed to the head of institution?

How are equality and diversity considerations, particularly disability, to be taken into account? How will the scheme provide the opportunity to raise these issues during the discussion?

Aims: plans, priorities, goals, objectives, or targets?

What style of outcome is appropriate for the prospective part of the review? Will the institution expect its people to develop or agree a statement of aims, plans, priorities, goals, objectives or targets during the review? If it will, how precisely should they be formulated? How many?

Whether or not the member of staff's aims in specific areas of work are agreed or set during the review, some time should be spent in considering or planning their personal development in the coming period.

Feedback for the institution

Will the institution itself seek feedback through the review process? How? If the reviewer is responsible for the member of staff's work, will he/she seek feedback on the relationship? For example, the note on preparation might prompt reviewees to consider providing feedback on the way the institution (or the reviewer) guides, informs, manages and supports them and their work.

Connections

How are member of staff's development or training needs to be notified to the person co-ordinating staff development in the department (the Staff Development Co-ordinator) or to CPPD?

Records

Who will complete the documentation? Who will receive copies of what? (Member of staff concerned, head of institution, CPPD?)

Where will reviewers store documents securely? How long will they retain them before destroying them?

Identifying and gathering general issues

How will the institution generalise from the experience of reviewers? Will they meet the head annually to summarise institutional issues and development needs?

Co-ordination and Monitoring

How will the institution co-ordinate the review process before and after each cycle of reviews? (Ensuring that latest versions of documents are used, that everyone has a trained reviewer and knows who it is and that staff being reviewed have had the opportunity of attending a briefing and so on.) In the Lent Term heads are asked for information for the Human Resources Division's annual report to central bodies on the appraisal process.