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1. Introduction

Performance and Development Review (PDR) is a University wide process to support staff in maximizing their contribution and furthering their development. The three primary components of PDR are performance review, the setting of aligned objectives, and planning for relevant professional and career development. PDR is a joint process, with the line manager/reviewer supporting and guiding staff to define and achieve their objectives and progress towards professional development ambitions. Whilst it is appropriate that PDR reviews can inform other processes where relevant, e.g. Reward and Recognition and Academic Promotion, it has been widely recognized that a meaningful PDR discussion is of significant importance and value.

This paper outlines the University's new framework for performance, aligned to the overall performance cycle.
2. Annual Cycle 2015-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Groups</th>
<th>PDR Cycle</th>
<th>Performance Review &amp; Objective Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management Group, University Services Leadership Team, Heads of Schools, Directors of Research Institutes, College Deans &amp; College Secretaries</td>
<td>1 May 2015 - 30 April 2016</td>
<td>May - June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other Staff</td>
<td>1 July 2015 - 30 June 2016</td>
<td>July - September 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The Process

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal, VP/Heads of College and the Secretary of Court are responsible for ensuring compliance with University policy on PDR. This includes setting strategic objectives aligned to the University’s strategy, determining the standards required and identifying/agreeing associated developmental plans. Further, they are each responsible for ensuring that line managers/reviewers are fully aware and apply a consistent approach across the University.

Prior to the commencement of the PDR cycle, it will be the responsibility of the Principal, VP/Heads of College and the Secretary of Court, in discussion with Heads of Units and local Heads of HR to produce a clear hierarchy of reviewers/reviewees. It is understood that the hierarchy may need modification as the cycle progresses and staff leave and join units.

3.2 PDR Hierarchy

Line managers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that reviews take place. Implementation will be through the agreed PDR hierarchy, which will often, but does not need to fully, reflect the line management structure, at Unit level. Units should work to ensure that: there are sufficient trained and competent reviewers; each reviewer conducts sufficient reviews to be able to recognise differences in performance levels and thus improve consistency of approach; and each reviewer has a manageable load. Ideally this will mean that each reviewer conducts no more than a maximum of 12 reviews. If not acting as reviewers, line managers are responsible for ensuring the nominated reviewer has all information relevant to carry out the review.

3.3 Alignment of Objectives

To ensure the activity of individual staff is aligned to the needs of the University, it is vital that the University defines and communicates its plans appropriately. The University has defined its priorities in the University Strategy 2015-2020 - Inspiring People, Changing The World supported by College, School/RI and Service strategic plans. This document is the key reference point for senior managers in determining their School/RI or Service plans and to help establish the desired outcomes required by each area to ensure delivery of these objectives.
The development and communication of these local plans is instrumental to the successful application of the PDR system; translating our high level strategic objectives into deliverables that are relevant at an operational level and enable staff to understand their potential contribution to the overall purpose of the University. The creation of these local plans will typically include information relating to staff and the associated skills required to ensure these plans are achievable. It is the role of managers, reviewers and supervisors to ensure this translation from strategic aims to shorter-term tangible deliverables and outcomes are effectively communicated in ensuring individual performance plans and objectives are relevant, appropriate and aligned with University ambitions.

3.4 Measurement and Performance Monitoring

To support the delivery of the University Strategic Plan, the University is piloting the use of Planning Dashboards which incorporate College/School/RI/Service KPIs. This tool will enable the University to monitor progress at a strategic level and drill into areas of concern. These will also provide a strategic focus for senior managers to cascade this information and the development of School/RI/Service plans in providing clarity as to areas of focus.

It is anticipated that CMGs/USLT will develop supporting operational information and systems that enable proactive management of day-to-day activities as well as providing key performance indicators to monitor progress against the desired strategic outcomes.

For Colleges/Schools this may include:

- Undergraduate satisfaction (NSS)
- Assessment and feedback (NSS)
- International FTE
- PGR:Staff Ratio
- Research output quality
- Research income per staff FTE
- Entry tariff

Sound business and management information is a vital component in informing the focus of performance management discussions to enable a tangible assessment of performance, aligned with the delivery of objectives.

3.5 Job Families, Role Profiles and Job Descriptions

A critical component of the University’s PDR Framework is to ensure that reviews are not completed in isolation but with reference to the appropriate Job Family role profiles and the job description of each staff member. The former provides an outline of the expectations of the role whilst the job description articulates the duties for which the staff member is responsible. The PDR review is also an ideal time to review the Job Description for accuracy and to record any changes which may have occurred.

The job family structure provides a clear and concise indication of general expectations at each grade level and facilitates a consistent and transparent approach to:

- Job grading
- Performance management and development
- Review and evaluation
- Reward and recognition
- Staff development
- Career planning and progression

The role profiles and job descriptions, coupled with the cascading of University objectives, enable objectives/performance standards and development plans to be agreed at an individual and team
level, and offer clarity to both line managers and role holders as to expectations relating to ownership of accountabilities and key areas of responsibility.

4. The Review Meeting

The PDR meeting is a face-to-face, two-way discussion between a staff member and their reviewer. The review discussion will essentially focus upon a number of aspects:

- review of the past year, with reference to any relevant documentation
- performance during the review period, in relation to duties, responsibilities, accountabilities, achievement of objectives/performance standards and display of appropriate behaviours/values
- update on progress and delivery of agreed objectives in year
- areas of excellence including contribution to team performance
- areas of performance that could be improved
- factors that influenced performance
- feedback from others, where appropriate
- personal development activities undertaken in the past year
- identify development plans for the forthcoming year, and
- objective setting/performance standards for the forthcoming year.

Objective deadlines should be set in the context of local strategic requirements and therefore may extend beyond the review period. In this case, milestones may be established within the review period.

The review process should flag individual staff and organisational needs to the reviewer, and if appropriate onwards to the line manager (if different) such as workload balance, job satisfaction, opportunity for challenge, growth and skill enhancement.

The formal review meeting provides the ideal forum for discussion of future plans including career development, long term aspirations or potential retirement, where relevant. Where an employee indicates they are considering retirement, more detailed discussion can take place around future intentions. Further guidance can be found in the University’s Retirement Guidance.

It is appropriate to provide the opportunity for all staff to discuss their future career intentions, including desire and readiness for promotion regardless of career stage.

5. Inclusions and Exemptions

All staff\(^1\), including those engaged on a zero hours and fixed term basis, should participate in the PDR process. Newly appointed staff should have objectives set until the end of the relevant PDR period in order to integrate them to the process. Performance ratings should be provided for all staff, including those who have completed their probationary period within the review year in question.

**Early Career Development Programme**

Early Career Development Programme participants should use the online ECDP Objective Setting Form to set initial objectives within the first three months of commencing on the Programme. PDR will take place annually, within the normal cycle, as detailed below.

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\(^1\) Excludes NHS clinical members of staff
**ECDP Start Date**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECDP Start Date</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>January</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Objective Setting</td>
<td>by 30 October</td>
<td>by 30 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial PDR Cycle</td>
<td>c 8 months</td>
<td>c 15 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 November in year of appointment to 30 June of the following year</td>
<td>1 April in year of appointment to 30 June in the following academic session*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Review &amp; Objective Setting</td>
<td>July - September</td>
<td>July - September</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, regular informal review meetings should take place between the line manager and the staff member in accordance with operational needs. For those staff appointed mid-way through an academic session, there will be the option to hold an intermediate PDR meeting in the year of appointment. In this case, staff should liaise with local HR teams to arrange access to the online system.

**Academic Probation Programme**

Academic Probation participants are exempt from the formal PDR process and should continue to use the relevant [Probationary Report](#) to set objectives and identify longer-term targets which support progression towards promotion. For those staff in Years 2 and 3 of the Programme, indicative performance assessment levels are captured following each annual review.

**Absence**

Where there has been a significant period of absence within the PDR year, i.e. long-term sick leave, maternity/paternity leave, research leave, etc., such staff may be exempt from participating in the PDR process. However, if exempt, objectives and development plans will require to be refreshed and updated on the staff member’s return to work to enable future engagement in the process.

**Resignation**

Where a staff member is due to leave the University during the annual review period there will be no formal end of year assessment, however, regular informal review meetings should take place between the line manager and the staff member in accordance with operational needs.

Please refer to your local HR team should you have any queries regarding staff who may be exempt from the process.

### 6. The Development Plan

A key outcome of the review meeting for all staff should be a development plan aligned with the goals and objectives of the staff member and the University. It will take into account existing knowledge and skills, the role and future development needs.

The plan may include:

- areas of development;
- how they will be achieved (e.g. support; workshops; on-the-job training; coaching; mentoring);
- how progress will be monitored.

The following might be considered when preparing the plan:
• general performance against objectives;
• new skill requirements or interests;
• potential ways to gain new knowledge;
• short-term and long-term career ambitions and plans;
• the ways in which development could improve performance;
• scope for development within current role.

Although reviewees are primarily responsible for determining and progressing their own plan and its implementation, reviewers should provide encouragement, guidance and support with this process. Applied fairly and consistently the process should reflect Equality and Diversity policies, focusing on individual performance, based on merit alone, cognizant of all equality implications. The University’s Athena Swan Action Plan encourages staff to discuss a development plan with their Head of School/Director of Research Institute to facilitate the potential for future promotion/career development. Women typically spend longer at the same grade before being promoted than men: this is particularly pronounced at the Grade 9/10 promotion point. In the case of staff performing strongly at Grade 9 who have been at this grade for more than seven years, reviewers are encouraged to explore with them in the context of their development objectives for the forthcoming year any actions, support or interventions that might initiate or further prepare an effective case for promotion in the future.

7. Performance Outcomes

The full PDR process should be undertaken openly and transparently. Reviewers should make an informed decision on the overall performance assessment descriptor that most appropriately describes the level of performance.

Performance outcomes will be informed by general contribution, achievement of in-year objectives and overall performance in the post.

Reference to Job Description, Job Family role profiles, academic promotion criteria, professorial zone descriptors and Russell Group Benchmark data should assist in informing decision making processes with regard to performance assessment outcomes at both team and individual levels. Further, assessment against agreed timescales, standards, and anticipated impact will be critical in making an accurate assessment.

The performance summary should be supported by a performance outcome based on the following indicators and descriptions. The descriptors are critical in ensuring that PDR outcomes are applied in a fair and consistent fashion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exceptional Contribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall performance is exceptional, demonstrated by the fact that all or most objectives have been delivered to an exceptional standard above the level expected for the role and grade. In addition the staff member may have taken on and delivered/contributed at an exceptionally high standard to activities outside the normal scope of their role.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Strong Contribution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall performance in the role is strong, demonstrated through strong delivery of objectives and progress against development plans. Performance has been within the normal requirements of the role with some elements above expectations.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inconsistent Performance</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall performance in the role is variable and some key objectives may not have been delivered to the required standard. Expectations are met in some, but not all essential areas of responsibility and further development is required.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improved Performance Required (IPR)</th>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Performance is significantly below the expectation of the role. Insufficient progress towards objectives and standards demonstrating clear areas of performance which have been repeatedly inconsistent or where significant improvement and/or personal development is required.

It is anticipated that the ‘Strong Contribution’ outcome will be applicable to a large proportion of staff. At all outcome levels it is expected that the reviewer, through quality dialogue with staff, will provide sound and constructive feedback relating to the staff member’s progress, level of performance and development needs.

It is important that the reviewer discusses, recognizes and documents where staff have fully met the requirements for the role and level, demonstrated through the achievement of the desired outcomes and objectives. This assessment should recognise areas where the reviewer feels the staff member has demonstrated over-achievement indicative of exceptional performance, by the fact that some objectives may have been delivered to a standard over and above those expected for the role and level, as well as areas where potential improvements could be made.

The IPR outcome can normally only be applicable where a staff member has previously been involved in discussion about their level of performance. This is likely to have involved local HR support and:

- a previous discussion between the line manager and the staff member as part of the normal management feedback processes (one-to-one meetings) or a previous inconsistent performance assessment
- objectives having been set for the required areas of performance improvement with a jointly agreed plan to implement these plans
- the staff member having been given a realistic opportunity to impact the required improvement objectives.

In all cases, visible evidence of documented under-performance resulting in an Inconsistent Performance or IPR outcome must be provided and a record kept of this along with records of all meetings and a copy of the agreed performance improvement plan (and any updates). The criteria outlined above should be carefully followed where the level of performance justifies an IPR outcome.

On completion of the annual exercise with performance assessment outcomes applied, each School/RI/Service should review the distribution of these outcomes to ensure consistency and appropriateness.

Factors that should be considered in this review are:

- Evidence and justification against the defined expectations of the role
- Diversity review. Have any staff been directly or indirectly disadvantaged due to factors such as gender, ethnic background, age, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation, part-time working or trade union activity.

This review should be completed before submitting to the VP/Head of College/Secretary of Court for final agreement.

It is important to emphasise that all the PDR indicators above refer to consistent performance throughout the whole year. The fact that a staff member may have delivered one good project in a year or developed a single improvement would not normally justify a performance assessment consistent with an ‘Exceptional Contribution’ outcome and may merely indicate performance in line with normal expectations of the role. The assessment must reflect the evidence available and must be consistent with the agreed expectation for the role and the objectives set.

It is anticipated that an ‘Exceptional Contribution’ outcome will only be applicable in the case of truly exceptional performance (if the process is being applied appropriately and fairly). Such cases will be
the subject of scrutiny at College/US level which may require further justification and evidence to support such an assessment.

The PDR process of regular reviews, supporting day-to-day communications, should seek to ensure that any disagreements can be resolved informally and quickly so that the end of year assessment comes as no surprise to the role holder.

8. Consistency and Accountability

VP/Heads of College and the Secretary of Court for University Services are responsible for the integrity of the process and ensuring that a robust and consistent approach is taken. In advance of the PDR round, each VP/Head of College and the Secretary of Court will outline their expectations in relation to the assessed performance levels. These will be informed by the professorial zone descriptors/academic promotion criteria and job family role profiles and job descriptions.

It is essential that staff perceive the allocation of performance outcomes to be fair. To assist in achieving this aim, the University provides an indication of an appropriate distribution that a well performing School/RI/Service may display. However, this is not intended in any way to create a forced distribution.

Reviewers should have discussions with their line-managers on determining unitary and university priorities to be reflected in individual/team objectives in advance of the annual PDR exercise. This will involve a level of agreement on the proposed percentage distribution of outcomes across each unit (School/RI/Service) in advance of the exercise and may include an indication, without prejudice, of anticipated review outcomes. It is essential for each reviewer to engage in discussion with their respective line manager on proposed assessment outcomes prior to communicating final PDR outcomes to reviewees. Inevitably, proposed outcomes will not necessarily fit our anticipated average distribution. The aim is to ensure that any significant variance from an average distribution can be justified in terms of comparative analysis between cognate units and the overall performance of the School/RI/Service against University, local strategies and KPIs.

It is incumbent on local management to ensure the process and assessment is genuinely fair, consistent and defendable before PDR outcomes are confirmed to staff. Devolving accountability to reviewers/local line management, coupled with the ‘grandparenting approach’ outlined below, will assist in enhancing consistency and minimise the need for moderation of assessment across the University. HR teams will assist in facilitating discussions at a local level with a view to maximising consistency of approach.

9. Grandparenting Approach

The ‘grandparenting’ approach provides an unbiased view and enables some calibration in terms of balanced and equitable objective setting and fair performance assessment across different units/reviewers. The grand-parenting concept relies upon the Head of Unit acting as the ‘grandparent’ reviewer for staff within their unit, with immediate responsibility for their direct reports. In this capacity, each Head of Unit will be required to discuss potential outcomes and common objectives to be cascaded prior to the PDR round commencing. This will also necessitate a review of those participating as reviewers throughout the PDR hierarchy.

The hierarchy will necessarily be designed to take account of the number of available competent and trained reviewers. Ideally, each reviewer will conduct somewhere in the region of 6-12 reviews in order to be able to recognise differences in performance levels (to support consistency of approach) whilst ensuring that each reviewer has a manageable workload.

Each Head of Unit will require to engage in discussion with those within their immediate span of responsibility, through the PDR hierarchy as agreed prior to the round commencing, on objective setting priorities and associated sharing of team/individual objectives. Further, this will involve a level of agreement on the proposed percentage distribution of outcomes across each unit
(School/RI/Service) in advance of the exercise and may include an indication, without prejudice, of anticipated review outcomes.

The process outlined above will in turn be replicated throughout the PDR hierarchy encompassing all staff within each unit reflecting a consistency of approach in objective setting and distribution of performance assessment outcomes.

It is anticipated that Heads of Unit will be expected and required to discuss and defend the performance profile of their unit with their line manager beyond the exercise in accordance with the overall performance of the Unit, and will be a key component of their role as a reviewer/line manager.

10. Recognition & Reward (Grade 10 and US Staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Senior Management Group, Heads of Schools, Directors of Research Institutes, USLT, College Secretaries</th>
<th>All Other Staff</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDR Review Period</td>
<td>May - June 2016</td>
<td>July - September 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocation of Reward Pot</td>
<td></td>
<td>October 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal's Board of Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>November 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal's Board of Review Outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td>By 30th November 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Equality and Diversity

The Performance Development Review process will be applied fairly and consistently reflecting the University's Equality and Diversity policies. It will primarily focus on reviewing individual performance in the past year, based on merit alone, taking into consideration the development needs of the reviewee for the forthcoming year, reflecting the University's strategic goals in objective setting and addressing any skills gap. Further information is available here – Equality & Diversity.