

# Annual Appraisal Academic Staff Guidance Notes

## 1. Introduction

The University of Sussex's Appraisal Policy commits the institution to providing all staff with an annual Appraisal meeting.

The University believes that Appraisal is central to developing and supporting its staff, enabling them to make an effective contribution to the success of the organisation. These guidelines aim to ensure that the Appraiser and Appraisee have a structured framework for reflecting on the work of members of staff and the reviewing and setting of objectives which places an emphasis on effective two-way communication.

This document provides advice on the operation of the Appraisal Policy, and specifies the responsibilities and standards required.

## 2. Scope

This Appraisal scheme for academic staff is relevant to Teaching Faculty, Research Faculty and Tutorial Fellows including where on a fixed-term contract for 12 months or more. There are separate Appraisal schemes for Professional Services staff.

Staff retiring during the review period and staff engaged on fixed-term contracts of less than 12 months' duration may, with the agreement of their Head of School, choose not to participate in the scheme. Staff who have joined the University towards the end of the review period or have recently undergone a review as part of their induction/probationary period may have their Appraisal deferred to the following year. Where this occurs, it should be documented in a memo signed by both parties and held on the staff member's personnel file.

The agreed Appraisal record will be used as one source of evidence to inform the annual pay review process. For example a member of staff or Head of School may wish to produce the documentation as evidence in support of an application.

### **3. General Principles**

The Appraisal scheme ensures that each member of staff has a structured meeting with his or her Head of School, or an appropriate nominee appointed by the Head of School.

The Appraisal meeting is an opportunity to receive and discuss feedback on performance; to chart progress and identify achievements; to consider the individual's contribution to the School and the University; to identify training and development needs and career progress in relation to academic promotion, and to highlight any barriers to more effective performance.

The Appraisal scheme operates on an annual basis, with every member of staff having at least one formal review meeting during a 12-month period that runs from August to July. This meeting should be considered as the documented stage of an ongoing process, and other informal meetings/on-going professional dialogue will be arranged in order to provide a more frequent review of progress, in accordance with specific school/departmental requirements.

The Appraisal scheme is intended to be a meaningful process and to generate as little paperwork as possible.

#### **3.1 Benefits**

It is intended that Appraisal will provide the benefits outlined below.

##### ***For individuals:***

- All members of staff will receive regular feedback on their performance, which will include having their contributions and achievements acknowledged.
- Appraisal meetings will provide an opportunity for staff members to discuss problems and difficulties in a supportive context.
- The meetings will help staff to understand how their work contributes to school and organisational objectives.
- The meetings will also provide an opportunity to identify training needs, access staff development opportunities and to discuss career planning.
- Appraisal aims to bring about gains in the teaching, research, administration, leadership and financial performance of the University which are for the good of all staff.

##### ***For Schools:***

- The Appraisal scheme will promote effective two-way communication between staff at all levels, which should have a positive impact on morale and motivation.

- The scheme will provide an opportunity for school and organisational objectives, and the roles that individuals play in these, to be communicated to staff.
- Appraisal will contribute to the school planning process, allowing opportunities for work allocation, providing a tool for training needs analysis, and keeping Heads of Schools informed about the activities, achievements and aspirations of their staff.

### ***For the University***

- Appraisal will support the achievement of the University's aims and priorities by ensuring that these are disseminated throughout the organisation, and that staff receive appropriate support and training.
- The two-way flow of information generated through the Appraisal process will in turn inform, among other things, a planned and focused approach to staff training and development, ensuring that staff receive the support they need.
- Appraisal is widely regarded as good practice in people management.

### **3.2 Appraisers**

Heads of Schools have ultimate responsibility for allocating members of staff within their Schools to Appraisers. Schools may organise this process in the way that is the most sensible use of resources. It is expected that staff will be consulted on the choice of appraiser for them and, in exceptional cases (e.g. problematic professional relationship with appraiser) should be able to request an alternative.

In the case of a potential conflict of interest (e.g. personal relationship with appraiser) another appraiser would be identified.

Where feasible and appropriate, staff should be reviewed by the person to whom they directly report.

Most Heads of Schools cannot review all of their staff. Schools will therefore have to identify groups of Appraisers, by whatever process they choose.

Nobody should act as an Appraiser unless he or she has attended the Appraiser Training (see 6.2 below).

### **3.3 Confidentiality**

The written record of the meeting is confidential to the Appraiser, the Appraisee, HR and the Head of School and, where the Head of School does not prepare the summary report (see

Section 4.3 below), the Head of School's nominee. When there is a change in the headship of a school all existing Appraisal records will be transferred to the new Head of School.

Appraisal records will be retained for three years. Usually when a member of staff leaves the employment of the University his or her Appraisal record will be destroyed unless it is anticipated that there will only be a short break in contract and the member of staff concerned will be returning to the same School.

Schools must establish procedures for the storage of these documents to ensure confidential access in line with the Records Management Policy. (Please note it is intended that the Appraisal record will be retained on the HR system, appropriate permissions in place, when this is available).

## **4. Outline of process**

### **4.1 Overview**

The focus of the Appraisal scheme is the formal review meeting held with each member of staff on an annual basis. This meeting will be informed by the identified aims and priorities of the School as detailed in the School Plan, and the University.

The process is concluded by the preparation of a School Summary Report by each School. This is submitted to the Head of HR Advisory Services or nominee following a discussion between the Head of School and relevant Pro-Vice-Chancellor, thereby completing a two-way communication process which will inform the University's planning, to include for training purposes. This exchange is a core component of the scheme.

### **4.2 Appraisal Meetings**

At the start of the process, Heads of Schools should nominate those staff who will act as Appraisers within their Schools, and oversee the allocation of individual staff to Appraisers. Appraisers should be identified and staff allocated in accordance with the requirements specified in Section 3.2 above.

As part of the preparation for meetings with individual members of staff, Appraisers should ensure that they familiarise themselves with the content of the School Plan and are adequately briefed on the aims and priorities of the university and the school, since these will be a feature of the meetings. Appraisers should then carry out the Appraisal meetings in a timely fashion and in accordance with the guidance provided in Section 6.2 below, completing the necessary paperwork afterwards.

It is important that this process is completed in sufficient time to review and consider staff development requests and allow for a School Summary Report to be produced and submitted to the Head of HR Advisory Services or nominee, as detailed in Section 4.3 below.

### ***Timetable for Appraisal Meetings***

The Appraisal scheme operates on an annual basis, with every member of staff having at least one formal review meeting during a 12-month period that runs from August to July.

Schools must have nominated their Appraisers in the Spring term at the latest. Appraisers should attend Appraiser Training as soon as possible after being nominated.

Appraisal meetings should normally begin from May, and all staff should have had an Appraisal by the end of July at the latest. In practice, Schools may wish to have some flexibility within this annual timetable so that appraisals can be conducted at times that are least disruptive to the core teaching and research work of appraisees and appraisers alike.

### **4.3 School Summary Reports**

The Appraisal scheme requires Heads of Schools to collate and submit a **School Summary Report** to the relevant Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of HR Advisory Services on an annual basis. It is the responsibility of Heads of Schools to ensure that this requirement is fulfilled, although this task may be delegated to one or more colleagues within the school.

This report serves three purposes:

- It provides organisational evidence that the process is being carried out.
- It informs the School about its collective activities, achievements and needs.
- It provides a vital source of information to the University on the agreed training, development, resource and other needs of its staff.

The summary report will be based on the anonymised summary statements produced during the Appraisal meetings of individual members of staff. It should include the following:

- The number and percentage of staff that have had an Appraisal during the review period.
- Brief reasons to explain why any staff have not been reviewed.
- Areas identified for further support, such as further training and development and Personal and Career Development Planning.

The summary report can be as brief as necessary, as long as it contains all of the required information, including support of staff development requests, although this will be anonymised. It should then be forwarded, with any comments, to Pro-Vice-Chancellor in time for the Autumn meeting of HR Committee. An executive summary of the information submitted in the school summary reports will be considered by HR Committee; the more detailed training and development needs will be considered by colleagues in HR who will broker and commission training as appropriate. Information on the percentage of staff appraised within each School will be reported to Council at the end of the Autumn term.

## **5. Appraisal Model**

This model for the Academic Appraisal Scheme is a portfolio-led model. This is appropriate for academic staff, who are already subject to a number of existing quality measures with regard to their teaching and research. It provides the opportunity for employees to draw together evidence, much of which has been generated through other processes, as the basis for an Appraisal. It is intended that information regarding publications gathered for the purposes of appraisal can also serve other purposes (e.g., REF), thus reducing the administrative burden on staff to compile various forms for different purposes.

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

### **6.1 Heads of Schools**

Heads of Schools have responsibility within their area of control for ensuring that the Appraisal process is carried out in accordance with these guidance notes.

This responsibility involves: identifying Appraisers; allocating members of staff to Appraisers; ensuring that an Appraisal meeting is held with all eligible staff within the prescribed period; making a decision on staff development requests and producing and submitting a School Summary Report to HR. In the case of a potential conflict of interest (e.g. personal relationship) the PVC for the school would allocate the member of staff an appraiser.

### **6.2 Appraisers**

As an Appraiser, you should ensure that you are familiar with the objectives and priorities of the school and the University, and use this information as a framework for Appraisals with members of staff.

Once you know which staff you will be reviewing, it will be your responsibility to contact staff in order to arrange for the meetings to take place. Meetings should take place within the prescribed timeframe (see Section 4), and Appraisees should normally be given at least two weeks' notice in order that they have sufficient opportunity to prepare for the meeting.

The way in which the meeting is conducted may be influenced by any specific guidance which might be issued, and the preferences of the two parties involved in the meeting. However, the meeting must be conducted in an open and supportive manner, and in accordance with the relevant training received. It must also cover the following areas:

- A review of the individual's performance and contribution over the review period, based on the evidence brought to the meeting. This should include recognition of achievements, as well as a supportive discussion of difficulties and the reasons for them.
- A discussion of how the individual can contribute to the achievement of the aims and priorities of the School and, where relevant, of the University, over the coming year (identifying objectives or service standards where appropriate).
- Discussion of proposed training needs necessary to ensure that the individual is able to make the contribution required, together with a general discussion about personal / career development issues including promotion, and how these might be supported.

Before ending the meeting, ensure that you and the Appraisee are clear about responsibilities for any follow-up action. After the meeting, you should ensure that the relevant paperwork is completed, signed and filed as appropriate, including ensuring that the Appraisee is notified of the approval of the Head of School of any training and development and that copies of the documentation are provided to the Appraisee and the Head of School as appropriate.

### **6.3 Appraisees**

Once you have been allocated to an Appraiser, he or she will contact you to arrange a suitable time for the meeting to take place. If you have concerns about the Appraiser you have been allocated, where this is not the Head of School, you should raise this with the Head of School.

Appraisal is intended to be an opportunity for you to talk about your work and future development, and you should approach the meeting in an open and positive way, being prepared to discuss progress and achievements, as well as areas of your work which may not be going so well.

Before ending the meeting, ensure you and the Appraiser are clear about responsibilities for any follow-up action including approval of any requested staff development. With your Appraiser, ensure that the necessary paperwork is completed and signed.

## **7. Staff Development**

The University are committed to providing staff with continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. However, not all CPD activities involve attendance at training courses and options such as extending the provision for mentoring, coaching or simply shadowing a colleague should be considered. Appraisers, and Heads of Schools in agreeing requests for continuing professional development, must take in to account any equality of opportunity issues which may arise from selecting individuals for CPD activities.

## **Appendix A: Appraisal Process**



<b>University Strategic Plan</b>
<i>informs</i>
<b>The School Plan</b>
<i>the objectives of which should be reflected in the</i>
<b>Portfolio-led Review</b>
<i>based on an</i>
Annual academic performance 'portfolio'
Annual appraisal review of performance
<i>A summary of reviews undertaken and the training &amp; development needs identified should be included in the</i>
<b>School Summary Report</b>
<i>which is submitted to the Head of HR Advisory Services and used to prepare an executive summary report for Council and HR Committee</i>