What does an effective one-to-one or PDR meeting look like?

Your role as a reviewer is to try and ensure that the review meetings you hold reflect as many of the points below as possible.

- You allow the reviewee to do most of the talking
- You listen actively
- There is time and scope for reflection and analysis
- Performance over the year is reviewed (there should be no surprises)
- Feedback, either negative or positive is based on the individual's performance and is specific
- The whole year is reviewed, not just recent or isolated events
- You review the outcome of objectives and development actions agreed at the last PDR
- Space is given to recognise achievements
- Ends with agreed objectives/ action plans

What might an ineffective one-to-one or PDR meeting look like?

- You do most of the talking – the review meeting is about the individual not you! You can allow silence during the review meeting that’s OK.
- Are you listening to understand or waiting to speak – use listening and questioning skills to ensure that the reviewee is listening too.
- Either you or the reviewee doesn’t contribute to the meeting. Some people may not want to contribute for a range of reasons, try and understand what these may be in advance of the meeting.
- Feedback, is based on personality and isn’t specific. The outcome of feedback is that it should lead to the individual understanding what it is that they have to do to either maintain or improve their performance.
- No feedback is given
- Only recent or isolated events are discussed. The review period should be a year. The individual’s contribution for the whole year should be considered and discussed.
- Context is not taken into consideration. None of us work in vacuums or stable environments. The context in which we work can have a significant impact on our performance. Remember that context includes both work and home life.
- Objectives identified are not done jointly. All objectives should be jointly developed and agreed. It might be that they don’t understand the faculty/departmental priorities/ objectives and how their job role relates to them. It might be that the individual is feeling demotivated and unappreciated. If this is the case then the PDR meeting is a good place to start addressing these feelings.

Having courageous conversations

It may happen that you need to give feedback that is not positive, or deliver some bad news. If so careful thought should be given to how the message is positioned. If done right feedback, even negative can strengthen working relationships and build trust (HBR, 2017). Feedback delivered, insensitively, without respect, or not done at all can have worse repercussions than the feedback itself.

The guide on difficult conversations or the difficult conversations online course might give you some further support and ideas.