PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW (PDR)

Handbook for managers conducting PDRs for support staff and academic-related staff
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Introduction

1. This handbook provides guidance to managers conducting annual review discussions within the framework of the University’s ‘Personal Development and Review’ (PDR) schemes. It can also be shared with staff, to give them reassurance about the role of PDR and to clarify their expectations about the process.

2. The guidance is intended to supplement the documentation provided by individual departments in support of their own schemes and is designed to be used alongside that documentation. If you have any questions about its content, or about the relationship of that content to the processes and practice in place within your own department, we suggest you raise those in the first instance with your departmental administrator or HR manager. Other queries, and any feedback on this handbook, should be addressed to pdadministrator@learning.ox.ac.uk.

3. The University does not have a single PDR scheme covering all employees. Instead, the Personnel Committee has agreed a set of principles to underpin departmental PDR schemes for academic-related and support staff. The key principles are summarised here: they can be seen in full at: http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/oli.php?page=110.

- PDR integrates the achievement of departmental objectives with support for individuals’ personal and professional development.
- It is integrated with existing staff management processes: the expectation is that individuals will be reviewed annually by their line manager or supervisor as part of a continuing dialogue throughout the year.
- PDR is based on an initial self-assessment by the individual: in advance of the discussion, reviewees reflect on their own performance over the previous year and propose appropriate work objectives for the coming year and areas for future development.
- The principle of ‘no surprises’ should guide the review discussion: both parties share their reflections in advance of the discussion; and reviewers should not raise for the first time during a PDR substantive issues in relation to an individual’s performance in the role.
- PDR should not be used as the primary means of managing poor performance; and there is no direct link between PDR and salary, promotion, or discipline, for which separate procedures exist.
Planning for PDR

The role of PDR

4. The PDR process builds on and integrates the regular discussions held with individuals or teams during the year about day-to-day work, including any changes to that work. It incorporates the following key elements of effective people management:
   - Clarifying and agreeing with individuals the requirements of their role and the expectations of them
   - Monitoring individuals’ achievements; and encouraging them to monitor their own progress
   - Giving feedback to individuals with a view to enhancing performance, motivation and job satisfaction, and career development
   - Developing individuals for the benefit of the individual, the department and the University.

5. PDR is also an opportunity to:
   - Get to know an individual’s interests, motivations and aspirations
   - Incorporate these in future planning
   - Invite feedback on your own contribution to the individual’s work during the year
   - Hear the individual’s ideas about how the department could support them in the role.

A reviewee has a unique perspective on the job, on you as their manager, and on the context in which they are working (systems and procedures, resources, department structure and colleagues’ roles). Requesting and listening to their observations and opinions during a PDR provides important recognition of that perspective as well as valuable information which can help you manage individuals and your team more effectively.

6. As well as delivering these positive outcomes, PDR can be used to address areas where an individual’s performance needs improving, as long as: you do not raise substantive performance issues for the first time during a PDR discussion; and you do not use the PDR as the primary means of managing poor performance. Separate procedures exist for dealing with unsatisfactory performance (referred to as ‘capability’). These can be found at: [http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/managers/grievance/capability/index.shtml](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/managers/grievance/capability/index.shtml)

7. PDR generally takes place annually and combines planning to meet departmental and University objectives with review of individuals’ performance and consideration of the support needed to achieve future objectives. It integrates a review of objectives set the previous year and the setting of new objectives for the coming year with an opportunity to discuss individuals’ development in and beyond the role. Used effectively, PDR can enhance the skills and commitment of staff, by helping them to assess their personal aspirations alongside the objectives of their department and the wider University.

8. Because PDR integrates and builds on existing staff management procedures, the expectation is that most individuals will be reviewed by their line manager or supervisor. Where an individual has more than one manager, or, for example, has day-to-day tasks mostly allocated by a project manager separate from his/her line manager, there will need to be agreement on who should carry out the review. Usually, one reviewer will conduct the discussion, seeking feedback from the other manager in advance. It is however possible to hold a three-way discussion, if this is the most appropriate format and the reviewee is comfortable with it.
9. Some departments carry out reviews at the same time each year, often as part of the annual planning process, while some will review individuals on the anniversary of their appointment. Whenever PDR discussions are held within your department, you will need to take the following into consideration:

- PDR provides an opportunity to take a long-term view. Where possible, it is helpful for departmental objectives to be agreed and circulated in advance of PDRs, so that individuals can take account of higher-level objectives in proposing their own goals for the coming year, and the department objectives can in turn inform the PDR discussion.

- During the year, there may be changes in the University or in your department’s objectives which will need to be taken into account in your planning. Some may be short-term and will need to be discussed with staff at the time, if the changes affect their work. Others will need longer-term planning, and thinking about them in advance of PDR will enable you to refine your view of how each member of staff may be able to contribute in the coming year.

- The PDR discussion is not the occasion to reveal major developments in the department’s working or in the role of an individual; or to give feedback for the first time on major issues of performance (the principle of ‘no surprises’). Significant performance issues should be addressed when concerns first arise and at regular meetings during the year, with advice as appropriate from your departmental administrator or Personnel Services. However, if concerns about unsatisfactory performance have already been drawn to the attention of the staff member, it is appropriate to refer to them in the PDR meeting, which will be an opportunity for discussing with the individual how he or she is responding to any measures being taken to improve performance, and the reasonable objectives that can be set for next year in the light of these.

- PDR needs to be conducted separately from consideration of merit pay. However, if the review of the past year indicates that performance has been exceptional, the record of the PDR can be used, with the consent of the individual, as one of the indicators that ‘an individual is performing well in all the key areas of their job’. A combined form, recording the outcomes of a PDR, and recommending an individual for a merit award, is available at: [http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/managers/salaries/merit](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps/managers/salaries/merit)

- A PDR discussion should not be used primarily to discuss re-grading of a post. However, if it is clear from the discussion that the role has changed significantly during the year, or is likely to change significantly, submitting a post for re-grading might be one of the agreed outcomes of the discussion.

- For employees on probation, a review discussion should be held no later than halfway through the probationary period. Some departments have a separate probationary review form; others use a modified version of the PDR scheme.
Planning for PDR (cont.)

Overview of the PDR process

10. The chart on the opposite page provides an overview of the PDR process (there are some departmental variations on this):

- 2-3 weeks before the discussion, the reviewee fills out a preparation form (known as ‘Form A’ by some departments), or considers a checklist of reflective questions.

- Where relevant, the reviewer agrees with the individual whether or not to seek feedback from other colleagues and in what format.

- Around a week before the meeting, the reviewee passes the completed form to the reviewer, to aid reflection and the giving of constructive feedback.

- The reviewer responds in advance of the discussion, letting the reviewee know of any additional topics he or she would like to cover in the meeting.

- At the end of the meeting, or just after it, the reviewer will record the discussion (often using ‘Form B’) and give the completed form to the reviewee for comment. In some departments, this form will also be forwarded to the reviewer’s manager for signature (a process known as ‘grand-parenting’), before being returned to the reviewer and reviewee for each to keep a copy.

- In some departments, there may be a separate form, or separate part of a form, detailing training or development requests that need to be approved at the level of the department or division. This is usually forwarded to the departmental administrator, or other scheme administrator.

- After the meeting, the reviewer and reviewee will follow up agreed objectives at regular meetings during the year. Some departments also have provision for an interim review after six months, to enable reviewer and reviewee to reflect briefly on progress against objectives, to consider whether those objectives are still valid in the light of any changes, and to consider progress in meeting any identified training or development needs.
Planning for PDR (cont.)

**Reviewee**
- Fill out form (usually Form A) and prepare for meeting

**Reviewer**
- Prepare for meeting

**Arrange meeting**
- Meeting
  - Review performance against past objectives
  - Agree future objectives
  - Identify development needs

**Write up meeting**
- (usually Form B)
  - variations by department

**Follow up objectives and development needs as agreed through the year**

**Departmental Objectives**
- **University Objectives**
Planning for PDR (cont.)

The role of PDR in aligning the job and the individual

11. When individuals are asked what helps them to do a good job, or to enjoy their job, their answers will usually fall into one of three categories: structure, stimulation or recognition:

- **Structure** – clarity about the role, its responsibilities and purpose, the reporting line(s) and relationships with colleagues’ roles, and, for some, career structure.

- **Stimulation** – will vary considerably between individuals but likely to include interest in the job, the opportunity to take pride in their work, challenge, using their strengths, developing their skills, and relationships with colleagues and those to whom they provide a service.

- **Recognition** – not just pay but thanks for their efforts, praise when they’ve done a good job, and a constructive and friendly atmosphere that respects them as individuals and values their contribution.

12. The PDR is an opportunity for individuals to take an overview of their needs and to put forward their own views and requests about the current job and about their future objectives and development. In preparing for and conducting the discussion, it is helpful to consider both the requirements of the job and the individual’s own skills and preferences: the greater the degree of overlap between the job requirements and the individual’s skills and preferences, the more likely it is that individuals will perform at their best.

13. In preparing for PDR discussions, you might find it helpful to use the tool in Annex A to consider the relationship between job satisfaction and performance for individual reviewees. This relationship can help to inform the objectives you want to discuss with the reviewee in the PDR meeting.
The PDR discussion is a unique opportunity to reflect on the previous year and to use that reflection to plan for the year ahead, away from day-to-day pressures. It is difficult to make the best use of the discussion if you have to recall everything that happened during the year just before the PDR meeting, and it is sensible throughout the year to keep a few notes in a PDR file for each individual. These are likely to include:

- Progress in meeting agreed objectives
- Follow-up to identified training and development needs
- Examples of exceptional achievement and things which didn't go so well for the individual and/or their work in the department
- Changes to the job.

Checklist for preparing for the discussion

In preparation for the PDR discussion itself, you will find it helpful to have the following to hand:

- Reviewee's preparation form, or note (usually ‘Form A’), annotated with any additional items you wish to raise during the discussion.
- If available, the agreed objectives from last year’s PDR, and the notes you have made on these during the year.
- Agreed departmental and team objectives for the coming year, and your own objectives.
- The reviewee's job description with notes of any changes, or likely changes.
- If agreed in advance with the reviewee, a summary of the feedback received from other managers, project managers, colleagues or external partners.
- Your own notes and reflections on:
  - the part you play in the reviewee's performance: how might they perceive you in this role?
  - this reviewee's strengths, interests and motivations, with evidence.
- Other feedback you want to give. This should not include important feedback on specific projects, events or developments which you have not yet discussed with the reviewee.
- Objectives you would like to discuss and agree with the reviewee for the next year.
- Notes on training and development carried out by the reviewee and ideas for development opportunities, including training, which might be useful in the next year.
- Questions you would find it useful to ask of this particular reviewee.
Preparing for giving feedback

16. Seeking feedback from others may provide useful information for the PDR. You should do this well in advance of the discussion, and you should consult the individual on who it would be appropriate to contact and who might give useful feedback: other members of the team; some of their own staff, if they manage individuals; other colleagues in the department or University for whom they provide a service; external collaborators? You should consider the format for the feedback, and how you are going to share the feedback with the reviewee – in the form of individual comments, or as a summary? Where you gather feedback from others, you will need to ensure that this observes the principles in this handbook and describes specific actions and behaviours: you may need to ask for clarification if necessary.

17. You should also alert your reviewee in advance if you intend to seek feedback from them, for example, on your own performance in the role, or on how you can better support them to achieve their objectives.

18. Finally, you will need to prepare for any feedback you want to give during the meeting:

- Take time to rehearse in advance what you plan to say and make brief notes if you need to.
- Think about the reviewee's likely expectations: feedback is likely to be less well received if it clashes with an individual's expectations – whether those are well-founded or not. Those expectations can be based on personal prejudices, on custom or practice, on previous departmental policy, on a lack of clarity, or on the absence of previous comment about a specific behaviour.
- Ensure that the feedback you intend to give refers to specific behaviours and examples and is not a personal or subjective comment; avoid using emotional language.
- Focus what you are going to say only on what you have directly heard or observed in others’ behaviour and ensure the accuracy of everything you will say – ‘if in doubt, leave it out’.

Conducting the discussion

19. Arrange the discussion well in advance, to allow you both time for preparation. The location should be somewhere where you will not be overheard: open plan offices are not generally suitable. A meeting room is ideal, but if the discussion has to be held in your own office, ensure that all phones are switched off. Try not to have a desk or other barrier between you and the reviewee. If you have to use a table, sit round the corner of it, rather than either side: this helps the reviewee to feel that this is a discussion in which they are being invited to take an equal part, rather than being interviewed.

20. Begin by confirming the purpose of the discussion in general terms and inviting the reviewee to expand on their comments on the preparation form by using open questions, for example: How do you feel the year has gone? Which aspects have you been particularly pleased with? Then:

- Ask for the reviewee's comments and ideas before giving your own. You may discuss the previous year’s performance in all aspects of the job before agreeing objectives for the coming year or deal with each aspect of the job in turn.
- For each of the objectives, discuss how these will be revisited and monitored during the year. Some objectives might be achieved before the end of the review period, while others will be on-going, and you should not wait until next year’s PDR to review and acknowledge progress against these objectives.
Holding the PDR discussion (cont.)

- Discuss any development needs based on the objectives.
- Ask the reviewee if he or she would like to discuss their aspirations beyond the coming year, or beyond the current role, and consider support for this where appropriate.
- Summarise orally what you think you have agreed. You can complete the PDR record (often 'Form B') during the meeting. Otherwise, complete it as soon as possible after the meeting and return it to the reviewee to add any comments and sign.
- While the aim is to produce an agreed record, there may be differences of opinion on some issues and it can be better to record these differences, where they are not fundamental to an individual's role, rather than spend significant time agreeing a final version. If there is a significant difference of opinion, you will need to consult the documentation for your own scheme, where there should be provision for appeal.
- You will also need to check what arrangements apply locally for storing PDR documents and sharing the outcomes of PDR discussions, in particular how to action training and development requirements.

Clarifying the key areas of the job

21. Both reviewer and reviewee need to be clear, for each of the key areas of the job, what outcomes and behaviours are expected and how these will be measured. If these are clear, the individual is likely to perform better and to be more satisfied with the role, and you will both be able to monitor progress on an on-going basis.

22. The key areas of the job are the main reasons the University employs an individual in a particular role. Ideally, there are around half a dozen of these in a job description. For each key area there will be outcome requirements and/or behavioural skill requirements

- **Outcomes** are usually measurable or quantifiable in concrete terms such as time, quantity, size, money (e.g. processing financial transactions within a certain time period).

- **Behavioural skills** need to be defined according to how the individual is expected to carry out the job to the required standard. This is harder to do and you will need to specify exactly what behaviours you would expect to observe.

Agreeing objectives within a PDR

23. The aim during the PDR discussion is to agree with the reviewee specific objectives for the duration of the review period, so that individuals are clear exactly what they are expected to achieve during the next year, and how their progress will be measured. The aim is to strike a balance between giving an individual enough certainty about their goals, and hence manage their achievement against expectations; and allowing them enough freedom to determine how they are going to approach a particular goal, and how they are going to manage their priorities on a daily basis. There is an element of judgement in this: more experienced employees may be de-motivated by overly rigid objectives, while new or more junior employees might welcome greater precision in goal-setting and you might wish to monitor their progress within more tightly specified time-frames.
Holding the PDR discussion (cont.)

24. There is no optimum number of objectives. Staff with roles covering several areas of responsibility, or several different projects, will have more objectives than those whose role has a single focus, or those whose role changes little from year to year. Begin by encouraging the individual to suggest their own task-related or behavioural objectives for each key area of the job, then make your own suggestions. The aim is to reach agreement on a single set of objectives that you both feel are realistic and achievable while being sufficiently stretching to motivate and develop the individual. Further guidance on agreeing objectives within a PDR is given in Annexe B.

Questioning skills for PDR

25. Four main types of questions will be useful to you during the PDR discussion:

- **Open questions** give the reviewee a free choice of answer and enable them to provide whatever information they see as relevant. They are particularly useful at the beginning of a discussion or to introduce a new topic: e.g. ‘what have been your main achievements in this area?’

- **Probing questions** encourage individuals to give more detail about a particular topic, e.g. ‘can you say more about why you found this difficult?’

- **Closed questions** control the length and form of the other’s person’s reply and are useful in moderation when you need specific confirmation of a fact, or to round off a particular topic, e.g. ‘how long will it take you to complete that?’

- **Clarifying/summarising questions** help you check your understanding, e.g. ‘am I right in thinking that you could have met the original objective if the software had been available as planned?’

26. Further guidance on questioning skills for PDR is given in Annexe C.

Listening skills for PDR

27. PDR is designed to give reviewees an opportunity to talk about themselves, their job and their performance and it is important that the reviewer tries to listen more than talk. Showing interest and attentiveness helps people to feel valued, and providing this opportunity separate from more pressured day-to-day work conversations will enable reviewees to express thoughts and opinions that they may not otherwise voice. You can show you are listening by:

- Your body language: turn yourself towards the reviewee, and ensure you are on a level with him or her.

- Looking at the reviewee and showing interest in your facial expression.

- Not interrupting: you may think of lots of things you want to say to the reviewee, especially if you disagree with what they are saying, but allowing them to take their time reinforces the purpose of the PDR discussion.

- Clarifying what they are saying or feeding back what you have heard as part of your reply. Otherwise, it is easy for it to sound as if you are ignoring their comments and moving on with what you were waiting to say.
Holding the PDR discussion (cont.)

28. You may find that you can explore a subject with a reviewee more usefully if you use their language, rather than interpreting what they are saying or re-wording in your own terms. For example, if a reviewee says: ‘I sometimes feel as if I’m climbing a mountain’, try responding with: ‘What does the mountain represent to you?’ rather than assuming you know. The reviewee could be talking about something personal to them (lack of expertise or confidence) or external difficulties.

Giving feedback within PDR

Feedback is information about our actions that helps us to learn.1

29. The purpose of giving feedback during PDR is to enable the reviewee to understand:
   - What they are doing effectively, so that they can continue to do it
   - What they are doing less effectively so that they can adapt a behaviour and improve their performance

The emphasis during PDR is to reinforce successful behaviours; and to focus other feedback on any changes to behaviour that are needed in order to support the individual in improving how they can do the job.

30. Within the discussion, the key principle underpinning the giving of feedback should be that of 'no surprises'; i.e. if you did not express concern when a specific behaviour took place, you should not raise it for the first time during the PDR discussion. Instead, aim to confirm and summarise your overall view of an individual’s performance, based on the feedback you have given them at regular intervals throughout the year.

31. In addition, the initiative should lie mainly with the individual: to reflect on their own progress, to identify where objectives have been met and, where they have not been met, what the barriers were. This is to help individuals to take responsibility for their achievement and to show that their opinions are important. You will therefore primarily be confirming and summarising feedback you have already given and providing feedback on the individual’s assessment of their performance. (In the first year of operation of a PDR scheme, there may not have been a continuing dialogue during the year about an individual's performance. In those circumstances, the individual should still lead with their own assessment of performance, but the reviewer might need to make some new observations about an individual's behaviour, or observations which differ from the reviewee's own assessment, without raising significant performance issues.)

32. Further guidance on giving feedback during PDR is given in Annexe D.

Receiving feedback

33. The PDR provides individuals with an opportunity to reflect on how you as their manager can support them in achieving the objectives of their role and improving their performance. You should actively seek feedback from reviewees – and some may volunteer it anyway. However, receiving feedback – both positive and developmental – can be as difficult as giving it:
   - Be open to receiving the feedback: recognise that feedback is a good way of finding out how others perceive you and of learning about your own style of managing.

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1 ‘Praise and the appraisal’, Nancy Slessinger, 2003, Vinehouse Essential Ltd
Holding the PDR discussion (cont.)

- Be clear about what feedback is being given; listen closely and ask for clarification if needed. Be assertive and ask for specific examples of the type of behaviour that is being cited, so that you gain a better understanding.
- If the feedback is positive, embrace it openly without being self-deprecating or under-stating your achievements. Giving praise boosts the giver’s self-esteem so it is important not to reject it. Thank the reviewee graciously.
- If the feedback is negative, distinguish between the content of the feedback and your reaction to it: it is natural to react emotionally to negative feedback as if it is an attack. Pause before you say anything, and ask probing questions if you are not clear what is meant, for example, ‘In what way do you find me unsupportive?’ ‘What kind of support would you like?’ Try to become curious rather than defensive.
- Acknowledge the way the individual feels by feeding back what you have heard, for example ‘I understand you feel I don’t intervene enough?’ This is different from agreeing.
- Reflect carefully on any feedback before deciding whether to accept or reject it.

Identifying appropriate support

34. When you have agreed objectives with your reviewee for the coming year, you may both feel that there is a need for support in achieving those objectives. That support might take the form of additional resource: for example, can other team members contribute their expertise to a new project; or might there be a requirement to learn new skills or behaviours. That learning can be acquired in two ways:
   - Formally (e.g. participation in a seminar, reading a book)
   - Informally, through experience (e.g. shadowing a colleague in another department)

35. In determining which form of support is likely best to meet the individual’s learning needs, it can be helpful to consider learning styles – the attitudes and behaviours that determine an individual’s preferred way of learning:
   - so that you can help individual staff learn and develop in ways that will be most effective for them
   - to understand that your own preferences may bias you in favour of recommending particular experiences for staff.

36. You or your staff can formally complete a ‘Learning Styles Questionnaire’ (contact liisa.worrall@learning.ox.ac.uk for details). However, even if staff have not completed the questionnaire, they will still have an awareness of how they prefer to learn things, and you will need to explore these preferences in determining what form of support would best help them meet their agreed objectives. For example, some people will prefer to read an instruction manual for a new piece of software they need to use, while others will prefer to learn by sitting alongside someone who already knows how to use it, while others will learn most from a formal course.
Holding the PDR discussion (cont.)

37. While you may identify a development need during the PDR discussion, it may not be possible to agree immediately how that need can best be met: you may need to conclude that the individual, or you if appropriate, will explore what forms of support are available; and that you will discuss these at your next meeting. The Oxford Learning Institute provides both personal effectiveness seminars and management and leadership programmes (see www.learning.ox.ac.uk) and maintains information on external development opportunities (see: http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/oli.php?page=82). Many departments have their own training and development budgets; and the University also has a Staff Learning Scheme, with a small budget to enable university staff to participate in externally provided development activities (see: http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/oli.php?page=81).

38. Once you have agreed with your reviewee the most appropriate forms of support, you will need to record your conclusions on the training and development part of the PDR record. Within most departments this form needs to be forwarded to the departmental administrator or PDR scheme administrator to identify and collate any needs that can best be met at the level of the department.

Discussing future aspirations

39. The main focus of PDR is on the coming year and aligning individual objectives with departmental and university objectives. However, some staff will have aspirations beyond the next year and this is an opportunity to find out about existing aspirations and to encourage those individuals who want to develop in or beyond their current role. This could help your own succession planning or encourage a motivated individual to move on within the University rather than moving outside.

40. Ask whether staff would like to discuss their future beyond the next year, or beyond the current role. Although a common question is to ask people what they see themselves doing in five years’ time, very few people see the future like this. Many are more likely to have a sense of what they enjoy doing most or what comes easiest to them, and discussing strengths with an individual can help them to think about how they can go on fulfilling their potential as time progresses. Often, people have no idea what future opportunities may be open to them. Giving people an opportunity, through participation in courses, or by work-shadowing, to find out more about the roles available in the University, can help to sow the seeds for future development.

Follow-up

41. For each of the objectives you agree, you will need to discuss how these will be revisited and monitored during the year. Some objectives might be achieved before the end of the review period, while others will be on-going, and you should not wait until next year’s PDR to review and acknowledge progress against these objectives. Some departments have provision for an interim review mid-way through the year, others leave it to individual reviewers and reviewees to agree a pattern of meeting that best suits them.
Annexe A: Relationship between job satisfaction and performance

1. The grid below shows the relationship between job satisfaction and performance. Use it to reflect on how you would approach the PDR discussion in each case.

**Job satisfaction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This person enjoys being in the job but is not achieving the required standards What do you need to address?</td>
<td>This person is doing an excellent job and seems to be enjoying the job. Is there any issue to address here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person does not seem to be enjoying the job and is not doing well in it either. What can you do?</td>
<td>This person is doing an excellent job but doesn’t seem to be deriving much satisfaction from doing the job. How can you stimulate this person’s motivation?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Performance**

2. Below are given some suggestions for consideration in each of the above cases. It is important, however, not to make assumptions about an individual reviewee’s level of satisfaction with the job. You may think you know what the individual enjoys about the job or what will motivate them further, but asking questions is vital – e.g. someone who enjoys compiling information about people’s training needs may enjoy the contact with people rather than the analysis of the information.

**Good or excellent performance/high level of job satisfaction**

3. This person is clearly a great asset to your department and the danger is of becoming complacent about continued motivation:
   - Ask about the individual’s ideas for their continued enjoyment in the role and how they could contribute to new departmental objectives.
   - Ask about their aspirations for the future. Their suggestions may help with your further planning and your ability to keep them in the department.

**Good or excellent achievement/low level of job satisfaction:**

4. There is a real danger that this person may leave, but finding a few ways to increase job satisfaction can have a dramatic effect. You might want to ask the reviewee to come to the meeting with some thoughts on what might increase their job satisfaction:
Annexe A: Relationship between job satisfaction and performance (cont.)

- Ask whether there are ways in which they would like to contribute more broadly, which are not currently part of their job, especially as part of a discussion of new departmental objectives.
- Ask about which aspects of the job they do enjoy and discuss how these might be enhanced.
- Ask about this reviewee's view of the strengths and skills they may feel they are currently not using.
- Discuss future aspirations and whether there is support and development you, the department or the University could offer now which will encourage them to move on within the University when the time comes.

Not achieving the required standard/high level of job satisfaction

5. If an individual has not been meeting the requirements of the job, you should discuss your concerns with him or her during the year. The PDR discussion provides the opportunity to explore in more depth the mismatch between the individual and the job.
   - Ask the reviewee to reflect on how they have met the requirements of the job over the year.
   - Explain your own expectations of the person in the job. Be descriptive and specific about how you currently see this person not fulfilling the requirements (e.g. you are still currently processing only 3 applications each day, and we need you to be able to deal with at least 10 each day).
   - Ask about what the reviewee is finding difficult, and what they think would help them to perform better (e.g. training, coaching from a colleague, more information).
   - Build on the reviewee's enjoyment of the job because this may reflect important strengths.

Not achieving the required standard /low level of job satisfaction

6. If an individual has not been meeting the requirements of the job, you should discuss your concerns with him or her during the year. In general, it more constructive to do this at the time that issues arise, rather than save it until later when it may be difficult to recall the detail. The PDR discussion provides the opportunity to explore in more depth, both why the individual is not meeting the requirements and why they appear to be unhappy in the role:
   - Ask the reviewee to reflect on whether the job is meeting their expectations and how they feel they have been doing over the year.
   - Ask the reviewee for ideas about what they hope would provide job satisfaction. If this aspect is where they are having most difficulties, you may be able to address performance and job satisfaction at the same time.
   - Talk about your own expectations of the person in the job and be descriptive and specific about how you currently see this person not fulfilling the requirements.
Annexe B: Agreeing objectives within a PDR

1. Start by considering the core content of the job: what is the main purpose of this role, and what objectives would be appropriate to capture any outcomes or behavioural changes needed over the next year? Then discuss subsidiary or less important elements. Within some roles, particularly service roles, some objectives, known as ‘standing objectives’, may remain largely unchanged each year (e.g. ‘ensure 95% of financial transactions are processed within three days of receipt’), while within project roles, there may be considerable ‘churn’ of objectives.

2. Finally, encourage the individual to think about whether it would be appropriate to include one or two objectives at a different level to their own role: e.g. how might the individual increase their contribution to the broader work of the team, the department, or the University, as appropriate?

3. In writing objectives, aim for the positive and support individuals to think about how they can move something forward. Use active rather than passive language that is as simple and unambiguous as possible: e.g., ‘Implement an integrated database for all Departmental users by December 2010’.

4. End by considering whether each of the objectives you have agreed are SMART, and how you will monitor and review progress in meeting them:
   - **Specific**: the objective describes an observable action, behaviour or achievement.
   - **Measurable**: it is linked to a rate, number, percentage or frequency, so that it is capable of being ‘verified’ – i.e. both you and the individual will know exactly when it has been achieved. This is harder to do for behavioural or people-related objectives. You may need to describe how the behaviour will look, or its effect on others, such as that the person will be appreciated as helpful or prompt by others.
   - **Achievable**: the objective is capable of being reached within the resources available to the individual – but is not too easy or simple.
   - **Relevant**: can this individual really make a difference – i.e. can they ‘own’ the objective – and is the objective of real importance to the work of the department?
   - **Time-based**: When will the work be started? When can it realistically be completed?

5. The following are examples of non-SMART objectives and SMART equivalents

**Non-SMART objectives**

- Recommend equipment updates
- Manage your team effectively

**SMART objectives**

- Provide fully costed options for replacing audio equipment as specified by users, by the end of each term.
- Ensure that all members of your team achieve their individual objectives by the end of the review period, with appropriate support.
Annexe C: Questioning skills for PDR

Open questions

1. These give the reviewee a free choice of answer and enable them to provide whatever information they see as relevant, and express it in their own way. They are particularly useful at the beginning of the discussion to open up the discussion, and for putting the reviewee at ease. For example:
   - How do you feel you’ve been doing over the last 12 months?
   - What have been your achievements?
   - What ideas do you have for making improvements?
   - What could the department/I do differently to help you achieve your objectives?

   ‘Why’ can be a way of starting an open question, but needs to be used with care, as it can come across as accusatory or as an interrogation (e.g. ‘Why did you do that?’) Often the same avenue can be opened up in a less confrontational way (e.g. ‘What do you think led you to do that?’)

Probing questions

2. Often people use general terms in their replies which could mean different things to different people. To understand the individual better, and overcome ambiguity and assumptions, you may need to use probing questions. For example:
   - Can you say more about that?
   - Which particular issues were difficult to agree with the Administrator?
   - In what ways would you say this option was better?
   - To what extent would you say the training helped you?
   - How would you achieve that?

   The following words and phrases can help with probing:
   - What specifically?  How would you...?  In what way(s)...?  To what extent...?

Closed questions

3. Closed questions control the length and form of the other person’s reply. They usually allow a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response, or a brief response of a single word. They tend to be less valuable than open questions, although they can be used in moderation when a specific fact, or confirmation of a situation, is required or as a way of rounding off a topic in order to move on to something else:
   - Did you send all the details to Accounts at the time?
   - How long do we have to complete this?
   - Do you agree that this is a good way forward?
Annexe C: Questioning skills for PDR (cont.)

Clarifying/summarising questions

4. These can help you check your understanding. For example:
   - Can I just check that I’ve understood correctly? Are you talking about post-graduate admissions here?
   - If I could just summarise, then. You feel that you would have been able to complete the project by the deadline of 1st December, but the computer problems in Accounts delayed you and you now expect to complete by 30 March next year. Is that correct?

5. The following questions are best avoided:

   Leading questions

   Questions such as ‘Don’t you think that…?’ ‘Wouldn’t you agree?’ lead the individual to assume they are meant to agree with you and you won’t receive a genuine opinion. Instead, give your opinion and ask for theirs in a straightforward way.

   Multiple questions

   If you ask several questions at once, people will tend to answer only one and others may then be forgotten: or individuals will answer the part of the question they are most comfortable with.

   ‘When you realised that you were not going to be able to deliver this project on time, what actions did you take and did you talk to your colleagues and the project sponsor?’

   ‘How often does that happen and does it worry you very much?’
Annexe D: Feedback skills for PDR

1. The purpose of giving feedback during PDR is to enable the reviewee to understand:
   - What they are doing effectively, so that they can continue to do it
   - What they are doing less effectively so that they can adapt a behaviour and improve their performance

Reinforcing effective behaviours

2. Ensure that praise is sincere and well-deserved so that it reinforces effective behaviours and continues to inspire and motivate the individual to continue with those behaviours. Giving generic praise, e.g. ‘you’re brilliant at your job’, is unhelpful. No-one is good at everything and blanket praise is ultimately de-motivating. Most individuals want to know exactly what they are doing well, so that they can continue, and what specifically they could improve on. For example:

   You have done an excellent job with the reports you've produced this year. I like the summary you have introduced at the front and the improvements you have made to presenting the data. I would also like to see the inclusion of material summarising the trends in the data you're now collecting: how do you think you could do that?

Securing changes in behaviours

3. As a reviewer, you have a right to want and expect reviewees to improve their performance if their behaviours are not in line with expected standards, if the individual can do something to change the behaviours in question; and/or the behaviours are impacting on the performance of others. You also have a responsibility as a reviewer to provide such feedback in a way that does not undermine the morale and credibility of the individual.

4. If you are seeking a change in behaviour, you need to describe exactly what is not effective about the current behaviour; and what change you are seeking, using the following prompts:
   - If the individual does not raise the issue in their own assessment, introduce it and refer to previous conversations.
   - Focus the content of the feedback only on what you have experienced or observed (or on what others have fed back to you, if you judge that you can rely on their observations and you have their permission to use their feedback).
   - Give specific examples, including time, places and circumstances, without introducing new behaviours in the context of a review meeting.
   - Provide examples of the impact of those observed behaviours on others: these can be members of the team, colleagues, or internal customers.
   - Don’t draw inferences or conclusions from those behaviours – though you can provide feedback on how an individual’s behaviour is being interpreted by others
   - Invite the reviewee’s response and take time to consider its validity: is there information you are unaware of if your assessment is different from the reviewee’s; are there genuine mitigating circumstances?
Empathise with genuine problems and discuss how to resolve them.

 Invite the reviewee to suggest an alternative behaviour, using open questions: e.g. ‘what do you think you might do differently this year to meet this objective?’

 Invite the reviewee to consider whether there is any support they would need to make this change in behaviour – including from you as line manager: ‘is there anything I could do differently to make it easier for you to achieve this objective?’

 Secure the reviewee’s commitment to adopting a specific action within a particular time-frame.

 Conclude by summarising agreed outcomes and actions.

5. In giving the feedback, you will also need to focus on your own behaviour:

 Keep the feedback content factual and adopt a neutral tone of voice.

 Avoid being judgemental and using words like ‘blame’, ‘fault’, ‘mistake’.

 Maintain eye contact while stating your position – but without being threatening.

 Throughout, take responsibility for and ‘own’ the feedback: use ‘I’ statements.

 Communicate your feedback clearly and unambiguously, resisting the temptation to ‘soften the blow’ (this can confuse the reviewee or leave them with the opposite impression to the one you intended).

6. Where you want both to praise one area of an individual’s work, and to seek change in another area, try using a feedback ‘sandwich’. Begin with what the person has done well, then what you would like to see them improving, and end with some other aspect of good performance. Many people are very self-critical and, if you lead with the areas for improvement, there is a danger they will focus on these and believe you have a predominantly negative view of them. However, if you finish with what they are not doing well, it is difficult to leave the conversation on a high note. However, it is not appropriate to use the feedback sandwich when there is only one issue to deal with. Making up things to praise in order to introduce a piece of criticism is usually obvious to people.