Guide to academic appraisal discussions

This guide has been developed in response to staff feedback from previous appraisal cycles expressing a need for a simple appraisal guide with prompts for discussion covering all areas that can contribute to academic career paths. Note this brief guide should be read in conjunction with the existing ‘Appraisal Guidelines’ and ‘Getting Started’ documents.

Objectives

Work objectives planning involves setting agreed goals that specify future expectations and ambitions. This includes a review of the past year that can help inform future planning. Objectives should be:

- Agreed statements of intent that benefit both Queen Mary and the individual.
- Tailored to the individual, arising out of a combination of their work responsibilities, interests and ambitions, as well as supporting the aims of the university.
- Appropriate to the context of School/Institute priorities.
- Expressed as outcomes rather than detailed descriptions of how work is to be done.
- Formed to help individuals move forward, as appropriate, on their career paths while contributing to the School/Institute.
- Expressed with as much clarity as possible, while allowing for change during the course of appraisal period in the face of shifting circumstances and opportunities.
- 4-5 objectives would be usual.

Objectives should be SMART

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<th>Specific</th>
<th>Measurable</th>
<th>Achievable</th>
<th>Relevant</th>
<th>Time-related</th>
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Examples of SMART objectives

- Lead development of new module in (specify) by (date), specifically targeted at (e.g. audience), potentially employing innovative technologies (e.g. ...)
- Submit applications for research grants to the value of £x from sources such as (....), with a backup plan for alternative sourcing by (date).

Themes

The following suggested themes contain pointers to support discussions when setting work objectives or reviewing previous contribution. Themes/sub-themes from each section may be selected based on an individual’s specific role and on the weighting of each of the requirements. They may also be selected based on future career ambitions, in order to support discussions on career development. An example of a completed appraisal form can be found in the ‘Appraisal Guidelines’ document.

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Diversity and Inclusion
Student Experience and Education

Appraisal discussions could refer to, but are not limited to:

**Teaching**
- Improved/positive module evaluation results.
- New ways of delivering course material or improvements to course content.
- Improved pass rates or improved results for students taking your module/s.

**Assessment and Feedback**
- Improvements to the turnaround time in which students have received module feedback.
- New ways of delivering feedback to students.
- Deadlines for assessment and feedback have been met in all cases.
- Students have been given clear information on the criteria used in marking assessments.

**Academic Support**
- Availability for students to make contact for advice and support.
- Broader leadership of the student experience and educational activities including personal tutoring.

**Employability**
- Provision of opportunities for students to gain work experience or work skills on your modules to support their future employability and entrepreneurial initiatives.

**Peer teaching observations**
- Using feedback from peer teaching observations to inform future teaching practice.

**Scholarship**
- Contribution to the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, teaching and education.
- This can take many forms and across disciplines. It does include the work undertaken in preparation for teaching, and keeping up to date with developments in the subject area to ensure teaching is informed by the latest developments in scholarship.

**Examples of questions to help formulate objectives:**
- What potential ways might you draw on new technologies or those available to you to enhance existing learning for your students along with your own skills?
- What skills and knowledge do you feel you need to investigate learning in the role of teacher-as-researcher?
- Name the ways in which you contribute to ‘communities of practice’ in teaching and scholarship either in your subject discipline or across subject disciplines? This might be either at Queen Mary or nationally?
• Have you considered whether you map across to the criteria for another category of HEA Fellow? E.g. Senior or Principal?

Research

Alongside the specific research undertaken and its funding, the broader research leadership of the discipline should be considered.

A full listing of individual research and innovation contributions by the appraisee should be considered. This would include:

- Publications and other research outputs.
- Research impact.
- Historical data for grant applications and awards.
- PhD supervisions and awards.
- Work contributing to research impact.
- Consider contribution to REF/TEF/KEF as relevant to the job profile.

Progress

Work in progress should also be described with expected timelines. This would include decisions on current grant applications, PhD completion dates for current students, expected dates of publication or availability of outputs or of impact-related events.

Contribution

Measures of esteem and contribution to the research field should also be given, such as awards, conference presentations, engagement with professional bodies and research organisations.

Independence

Researchers should always be encouraged to reflect on their future as independent researchers – what does independence mean to them? For recent PhD graduates, some coaching may be required to support their thinking process.

Research culture

Include all contributions to the research culture in the School/Institute, and Faculty/university as appropriate – e.g. leadership roles, support for Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, facilitation of research interactions and collaborations, the building of growth of networks or centres. This would normally provide a framework for the discussion of plans and of how these can be supported.

Examples of questions to help formulate objectives:

• Have you drafted a career plan? Many researchers (who desire an academic career) tend to paint their futures in very broad strokes: e.g. postdoc for a few years, apply for fellowships, transition to lectureships. Although vague, this level of detail is acceptable for those who have recently completed their PhD. Appraisers should focus the conversation by getting the researcher to consider areas of academic practice where they lack experience in. These might include:
• developing their funding track-record (even small scale travel grants);
• the establishment/development of their independent research profile;
• how they might better engage with their discipline’s research community?
• how they might better engage with other researchers at their School/Institute, or at QMUL?
• how they might better engage with the public about their research?
• how they might better engage with the beneficiaries of their research?
• are there any opportunities to gain teaching experience?

• Are there any research skills (e.g. new methods, techniques, technologies, methodologies) that they would consider useful to applying towards their research?
• How do they intend to engage in continuing professional development over the next year?

Public Engagement and Impact

Areas to consider include:

• Leading on, or being part of public engagement activities related to research or teaching.
• A focus on building wider understanding of the discipline and creating partnerships with other organisations.
• Undertaking activities which effect, change or benefit the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia (impact).
• Developing skills in public engagement through training opportunities.
• Applying for public engagement grants/awards, or including this within other grant proposals.
• Demonstrable commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.

Examples of questions:

• How are you involving public engagement in your work?
• Have you taken advantage of any internal or external opportunities to engage public audiences with your work?
• What support do you need to further develop thoughts or ideas to implement such initiatives?
• What outcomes are you hoping to achieve and how do these align with relevant strategies?

Management and Collegiality

This would include the wider support of, and general contributions to, the School, Faculty and Queen Mary, and would include the activities that denote the achievement of a widening sphere of influence. Examples are:

• Guiding and mentoring/coaching others.
• Developing and supporting direct reports and colleagues.
• Shaping and influencing the direction and agendas within their discipline, school/institute or the university and putting it into practice.
• Shaping and influencing wider societal agendas.
• Demonstrable commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.
Examples of questions:

- Describe how you contribute to the school/institute’s strategic agenda.
- Describe how you have ensured that the strategic objectives are being met.
- What strategies have you used to identify the support needs of your staff?
- How successful have these been and what can be done differently?
- What are the key drivers that motivate those that you support or line-manage?
- How have you established that?
- How do you set objectives for staff that you support or manage?
- How are you ensuring the staff that you support or manage are delivering on their objectives?

Professional Practice

Areas to consider include:

- Industry standard expectations appropriate to the role.
- Demonstrable commitment to ethical practice in line with profession.
- Demonstrable commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.

Examples of questions:

- Where an academic role is combined with the continuation of a relevant profession, how is that professional practice being utilised and further developed?
- How is knowledge of the profession being maintained and updated?

International

Areas to consider include:

- Delivering excellence and innovation in teaching and learning in transnational education.
- Enhancing the international student experience.
- Developing outbound and/or inbound student mobility initiatives.
- Engaging in collaborative research for significant impact.
- Engaging with international policymakers or industries.
- Engaging in fund-raising.
- Supporting international student recruitment.
- Supporting alumni engagement.
- Developing world-class research partnerships.
- Demonstrable commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.

Examples of questions:

- How do you engage in teaching and learning initiatives with TNE partners?
- What approaches have you taken to enhancing the international student experience?
- What impacts have you made by your engagement with the mobility agenda?
- How has collaborative research enhanced the impact of your work and how can you share this experience?
- How have you engaged with international policymakers or industry in research or education?
What models of alumni engagement have you adopted/developed and what are the learning points for other colleagues?

Career and Development Planning

- Appraisers should encourage discussion of career aims in order to ensure as far as possible that objectives contribute towards progression.
- Appraisees should be encouraged to develop skills and career paths, to aim for promotion or new fields where appropriate and appraisers can suggest development opportunities such as secondments, or outside engagements, as long as no pressure is placed on the appraisee to take on such roles.
- For some this may be a brief conversation insofar as they do not want to move from their current role in the foreseeable future. Focus would therefore be on how they keep themselves up-to-date in their current role.
- Agree development plans. Describe specific activities that will be undertaken to progress.
- Avoid defaulting to only thinking about training, which accounts for around 10% of what we learn; most new expertise is acquired through exposure to new situations, people and challenges. Consider, therefore, suggesting new responsibilities to gain different experience or outside engagements.
- Conversations on early career pathways may be wider than the academic career path and/or higher education where it is helpful.

Examples of questions:

- Consider how you intend to engage in continuing professional development in your subject discipline and its pedagogy. This might include incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of your professional practices.
- Write an action plan outlining your planned CPD for the next 12 months and what impact you see this as having.
- How do you intend to build on the skills and knowledge gained from your qualification (e.g. for a teaching qualification e.g. PG CAP, PG Cert Teaching and Learning)?
- Think about your journey from early careers to leader and mentor for others and think about any other relevant qualifications and professional development which you would find helpful at this point in your career.
- What support do you need to achieve your objectives?

Diversity and Inclusion

This theme relates to the recognition and valuing of difference in the broadest sense. When staff embrace the concepts of diversity, they are demonstrating the efforts they are making to recognise that people in the workplace are of differing cultural, ethnic, racial and gender backgrounds that have different religions, nationalities, ages and capabilities.

Everyone must be given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and develop their potential.

Areas to consider include:

- Demonstrable commitment to Diversity and Inclusion.
- Flexing own style and approach to complement others.
- Indications of engagement with different groups from diverse backgrounds.
- Demonstrable championing of the leadership of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Experience of coaching or mentoring people with one or more of the protected characteristics.
- Attendance at Unconscious Bias training.
- Completion of EDI online training, once available.
- Attendance at Recruitment & Selection training.

Examples of questions:

- *In what ways have you been able to maximise the value of diversity within your team?*
- *How do you vary your approach for different people within your team?*

**Clinical Academic Appraisals**

Clinical academic staff have separate arrangements for appraisal in line with their partner trust, which take into account Follet Principles. For more information, please contact your Institute Manager or HR contact. Further details on the Follet Principles can be found here: https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/contracts/academics-contracts/follett-review-principles
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