

Appraisal for Researchers

FAQs

THE PROCESS:

- Does the appraisal process apply to all research staff?
- When should appraisal meetings be held?
- What is the period of time being reviewed?
- Do I have to have an appraisal?
- Do I have a choice of appraiser?
- Is the process confidential?
- What if my training and development needs cannot be met?
- How will outcomes of my appraisal be monitored?
- Can poor performance be discussed in an appraisal meeting?

WHAT IF....?

- the researcher is new to the organisation?
- the researcher doesn't have a job description?
- the researcher has not been at work due to a long term absence?
- the researcher has had several roles within the review period?
- the researcher has changed jobs/roles within the review period?
- the researcher is on a fixed term contract?

WHAT ARE....?

- SMART objectives?

Does the appraisal process apply to all research staff?

In accordance with the University Concordat Action Plan 2012-14, all research staff in Higher Education should undergo a Professional Development Review, which is called an appraisal at UEA, regardless of the contract length or whether his/her contract is for a short temporary period, fixed term or open ended.

<http://www.uea.ac.uk/hr/employee-information/appraisal>

When should appraisal meetings be held?

The exact timetable for appraisals will be determined at departmental level. The process is normally initiated in January by the Head of School, and most meetings take place early in the Spring Semester.

What is the period of time being reviewed?

In normal circumstances, the period under review is the 12 month period since the previous review meeting. In practice, this would usually cover the previous academic year. If a member of staff has only been in post for a short time or has been absent

for a significant part of the year (e.g. on study leave, maternity leave) the process should be used flexibly to allow for those circumstances.

Do I have to have an appraisal?

In accordance with the University Concordat Action Plan 2012-14, all research staff in Higher Education will normally undergo a **Professional Development Review**, which is called an **appraisal** at UEA.

Our interpretation of how we are implementing the principles of the Concordat is contained within the UEA Concordat Action Plan 2012-14, 2.1.5. All research staff are offered an annual appraisal.

Further information on the benefits of an appraisal can be found here <http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/323631/Benefits-of-appraisal.html>

Do I have a choice of appraiser?

Your appraiser will normally be your PI, however you are able to request an alternative. The Head of School/Department will consider requests for an alternative appraiser.

Is the process confidential?

What is said between the parties during the appraisal meeting should remain Confidential, unless noted as part of the appraisal outcomes on the appraisal form or otherwise agreed. The signed appraisal form should be received by the Head of School/Department.

What if my training and development needs cannot be met?

It is important that there is a clearly identified need for, and benefit from, any proposed training/development activity. If any training/development needs discussed at your appraisal meeting cannot be supported then feedback will be given.

How will outcomes of my appraisal be monitored?

Actions should be agreed in the meeting and it will be yours, and your appraiser's, responsibility to make sure that these happen.

Can poor performance be discussed in an appraisal meeting?

The appraisal meeting should not be the first time that you find out that your performance is not at the required standard. A key part of the process is supporting researchers to develop their performance, so the discussion should be focused around identifying key areas for improvement, and ways to support this improvement through objective setting and development activity.

What if the researcher is new to the organisation?

When an individual starts, a planned induction should be in place which includes the setting and reviewing of objectives as well as regular opportunity for the individual to receive feedback on what they've done and how they've done it. The first appraisal meeting should take place within two months of the start date and can be incorporated into this induction process.

What if the researcher doesn't have a job description?

All new staff will receive their job description during the recruitment process, and all existing staff should already have a copy of it. If not, Local Support should be able to help.

What if the researcher has not been at work due to a long term absence?

Regardless of the length of time absent from work they should still receive feedback, be set objectives, and have any development needs identified.

What if the researcher has had several roles within the review period?

If the researcher has more than one role, or changed roles, the manager of the substantive role is responsible for collating information for the appraisal meeting. Where possible the appraiser should talk to the researcher's previous manager in order to identify additional feedback.

What if the researcher is on a fixed term or short term temporary contract?

The researcher should have an appraisal meeting regardless of whether his/her contract is for a defined period or open ended. The Concordat on the career management of contract research staff strongly supports this view. Staff on fixed term or short term temporary contracts are often in the early stages of their careers, when feedback, discussion on career aspirations and future objective setting are particularly valuable.

What are SMART objectives?

An objective is a clear statement of something that needs to be accomplished within a given period of time. SMART objectives are:

Specific – states exactly what you need to achieve.

Measurable – could someone else determine that your objective has been achieved ?

Achievable – is it possible? Objectives should be genuine and can be challenging but not unrealistic or impossible to achieve.

Relevant – objectives should link in with the overall aims of the project, lab, School or Faculty.

Timebound – include a clear end date or timescale.

Here are some tips for ensuring that your objectives are SMART:

SPECIFIC

Objectives should clearly state what you are expected to achieve, using action verbs to describe what has to be done. For example:

Not specific: Conduct research

Specific: Formulate plans for research on topic X.

MEASURABLE

Objectives should include a quality and/or quantity reference so that you can measure whether or not you have achieved them. For example:

Measurable: Formulate plans for research on topic X *and submit* Research Council Fellowship applications.

ACHIEVABLE

Objectives should be challenging but they should not be unrealistic and they should be agreed with the appraisee. They should also take account of the skills, knowledge and resources needed to achieve them. You may need to consider whether you need any training or development (or other support) in order to achieve the objective.

Achievable: Formulate plans for research on topic X and submit *at least one* Research Council Fellowship application .

RELEVANT

Objectives should be genuine and add value, be relevant to the role and driven by University strategy and School/Institute/Section plans.

Relevant: Formulate plans for research on topic X and submit at least one *fully funded* Research Council Fellowship application .

TIMEBOUND

Objectives should include a time reference, such as a specific deadline. For example:

Timebound: Formulate plans for research on topic X and submit at least one fully funded Research Council Fellowship application *by 31st December 2015.*

If there is a particularly long timescale involved, you may need to break your objective down, identify the steps you need to take to achieve your overall objective and work out how long each step is likely to take so that you can agree a target date.

Human Resources Division

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