

## **Performance and Development Review (PDR) Scheme for Academic Teaching Staff**

### **Briefing for Reviewees**

**October 2013**

#### **Introduction**

In 1987, the University introduced what was then called an 'appraisal' scheme, which was renamed the 'staff development review' (SDR) scheme in 1998. Both schemes had in common an aspiration to help staff improve their performance and develop their careers within the context of their employment in the University. Now, in the light of the University's strategic framework '*Enhancing our future: Birmingham 2015*' the opportunity is being taken to review and renew the SDR scheme to help individual members of staff achieve of their best, for those individual achievements to contribute collectively to the achievement of the University's goals as set out in '*Birmingham 2015*', and thereby to enhance career opportunities of individual members of staff within the University.

The PDR scheme was piloted among academic teaching staff in 2012-13 and, following evaluation and adjustments to the pilot scheme, PDR is now live for all academic and related staff from October 2013.

The following series of questions and answers are intended to introduce the new PDR scheme to members of the academic and related staff who will be reviewed under the PDR scheme and to help them to prepare for their participation in it.

#### **Development of the PDR scheme**

##### **1      *How was the PDR scheme developed?***

The University Executive Board (UEB) drew up terms of reference for a review of the SDR scheme and appointed a Steering Group to oversee the review on its behalf. The Steering Group was chaired by Professor Martin Stringer, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor, and included representatives from each College and UCU.

##### **2      *What did the Steering Group do?***

The Group collected evidence from within the University on the operation of the SDR scheme and from other organizations on the operation of similar schemes; it considered the existing SDR scheme in the light of the terms of reference set out by UEB and suggested some revisions to it; it conducted a consultation with all academic and related staff, which resulted in further adjustments to the scheme; and it recommended to UEB that the resulting scheme – to be called the PDR scheme – should be run on a pilot basis for Academic Teaching staff during 2012 before being rolled out to other academic and related staff groups in 2013.

### **3 What is the purpose of the PDR scheme?**

The primary purpose of the PDR scheme is to help staff to enhance their performance with a view to achieving their own career aspirations at the same time as helping the University to realize its strategic goals. Paragraph 1 of the PDR scheme itself sets out in more detail what this means:

*“The Performance and Development Review (PDR) Scheme is designed to provide a transparent and, so far as possible, objective scheme through which individual performance is stimulated, supported and managed in the context of continuing personal and professional development. It has the following objectives:*

*For the individual:*

- *to enable members of staff to develop their University careers by discussing, reviewing and setting challenging yet realistic targets and objectives, within the context of the aims of their School/Budget Centre, College and the University;*
- *to foster a spirit of trust and co-operation;*
- *to help staff achieve their best;*
- *to identify and develop potential for promotion;*
- *to identify and celebrate high performance;*
- *to identify and address under performance;*

*For the University:*

- *to enhance staff performance;*
- *to help the University to achieve its challenge of becoming a leading global university;*
- *to identify changes in the organisation or operation of the School/Budget Centre, College or University which would enable individuals to optimise their performance;*
- *to contribute to the University’s policy aim of ensuring that all staff have equality of opportunity in employment and in relation to personal and career development according to their qualifications, abilities and potential. “*

### **4 What are the characteristics of the PDR scheme?**

The PDR scheme is based on a regular (annual) meeting between the member of staff’s Head of School or Corporate Service, or a representative of the Head of School/Service, (as Reviewer) and an individual member of staff (as Reviewee). Both Reviewer and Reviewee prepare for the meeting - see below - and share their preparation with each other. The structure of the meeting is a review of progress towards achieving objectives which have been set previously and setting objectives for the year ahead. The objectives will encompass both performance targets and personal development targets. A report of the meeting is prepared by the Reviewer for the Reviewee’s comments and the approval of the Head of School/Service.

#### **4 How does the PDR scheme differ from SDR?**

There are some key procedural differences most notably that a formal review takes place between the reviewee and reviewer at least once every twelve months whereas under the SDR scheme the minimum frequency – for academic teaching staff, at least - was once every two years. The PDR meeting should be a culmination of a regular performance dialogue but the new scheme does not prescribe the time of year at which such discussions should take place. Procedurally, the PDR scheme is little different from SDR for administrative and other academic related staff.

More fundamentally there is a nuanced but significant shift in the focus between the SDR and the new PDR. SDR almost wholly focused on the personal development of the individual. That remains an important facet of the new programme but its aspiration is to have a more even balance with performance assessment. Clearly the two things are inextricably linked.

#### **5 How was the PDR scheme introduced?**

Initially, the PDR scheme was run as a pilot scheme for Academic Teaching Staff in 2012, with a view to extending it to other groups of academic and related staff in 2013. Reviewers - identified by Heads of School - attended a programme of development workshops to prepare them to carry out their role: this included briefing them on the new scheme but also developed the skills required to set realistic yet challenging targets and to motivate their colleagues.

Following the pilot reviews, the operation of PDR was evaluated and adjustments were made to the scheme in the light of feedback. The revised version of the scheme has now been approved by the University executive Board to be rolled out to all academic and related staff for the 2013-14 round of reviews.

### **Next steps**

#### **6 What do I need to do now as a Reviewee?**

A flowchart of the process is available at <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/documents/public/pdr/academic/PDR-flowchart-Nov-13.pdf>

Firstly, you should establish who your reviewer will be: your Head of School/Service will be able to tell you if you don't already know. Once you know who your reviewer will be, between you, you should consider when, between 1 August and the following 31 July, it would be best for the PDR meeting to take place. Then, a few weeks before the date of the review meeting, you should carry out the preparation outlined in paragraph 9 of the PDR scheme:

*“It is the responsibility of the reviewee to prepare a brief document for discussion, to be provided to the reviewer at least ten days before the interview, which includes:-*

- (i) a statement of the objectives agreed following the previous interview;
- (ii) a summary of relevant activity and achievement since then which shows how those activities and achievements measure up to the objectives, together with an explanation of the reasons for any variation from the agreed objectives;
- (iii) suggested objectives for the next year (although this does not preclude the possibility of longer term objectives being suggested);
- (iv) aspirations for the future (e.g. promotion, retirement etc.);
- (v) any ideas for continuing professional development or personal development;
- (vi) any other items for discussion not included in the above."

## **7 Is there a specific format I need to follow for my preparation?**

The areas to be addressed by Reviewees in the preparation are set out above. Paragraph 9 of the PDR scheme goes on to provide guidance about format:

*"The Head of School/Budget Centre will provide guidance on which forms should be used. Whatever the format of the document, it must include statements addressing the matters detailed in items (i) to (vi) in the order set out above. The submitted document should provide sufficient information to enable a constructive discussion to take place. For a first review no documentation from a previous meeting will be available, although objectives may have been set through other means (e.g. through a recruitment/induction process or through other review processes which may have been operating)."*

To support this, a Reviewee preparation form and a Reviewee preparation template for academic and related staff are available at <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/employment/pdr/academic-teaching.aspx> Check with your reviewer if there is a preferred format for you to use. If not, you can use one of the templates, or a free format of your own choosing, so long as you cover the six areas set out in paragraph 9 of the PDR scheme.

## **8 What happens next?**

You should aim to give your preparation to your reviewer two weeks before the date of the review meeting. Your reviewer, or the School /Service PDR co-ordinator, will make arrangements for the meeting itself - time, date and location – and will let you know. Before the review meeting, you will need to consider any information your Reviewer may have given you, so that you can engage in a meaningful discussion. Remember, the primary purpose of the PDR scheme is to help to enhance personal and institutional performance: there is no hidden agenda.

**9** *What broader support is available to help me achieve my PDR objectives?*

A series of web links has been drawn together as ‘resources for reviewers and reviewees’ – see

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/documents/public/pdr/academic/Resources-for-reviewers-and-reviewees-Oct-13.pdf> - to help all concerned to get the most out of the PDR scheme. Your reviewer may be able to suggest other ways in which you can optimise your achievements.

**10** *Where can I get further information about the PDR scheme?*

Further information is available from your Reviewer, or from the PDR website

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/employment/pdr/index.aspx>

A series of frequently asked questions and answers is available at

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/documents/public/pdr/academic/PDR-QA-Oct-13.pdf>. If there are any further questions you have which are not dealt with there, please contact Gillian Hancox, [G.M.Hancox@bham.ac.uk](mailto:G.M.Hancox@bham.ac.uk) .