
What is Staff Review and Development?

(From the SRD Guidance Booklet for all Staff, 2008 -

http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/appraisal/guidance_booklet.pdf)

Staff Review and Development (SRD; a development of our appraisal procedures) is an essential part of the University's commitment to developing staff and to delivering a high quality service. Its purpose is to enhance work effectiveness and facilitate career development; it involves discussing ways in which your work could be developed and ways in which any difficulties and obstacles to progress could be removed.

Through the process SRD aims to:

- provide an opportunity for positive and constructive two-way review of work progress
- allow agreement of an action plan
- provide for discussion of training needs for your current role and career development.
- allow for identification and discussion of difficulties or obstacles to your effectiveness
- provide a way of balancing your personal needs and ambitions with the University's overall objectives

Outcomes for the person being reviewed

- Agreed, objective view of performance
- Clarification of priorities, roles and responsibilities
- Clear, agreed goals – direction
- Recognition and support
- Opportunity for personal coaching or mentoring
- Agreed support for development of career/skills/experience
- A formal record of experience and learning over time
- A period of undivided attention, focus on individual and their job
- ? better communication, increased motivation, more satisfaction, trust

Outcomes for the reviewer

- A better informed approach to managing the individual
- Identification of obstacles to progress
- ? a happier, more motivated member of staff, feedback on his/her own management practice, better communication, trust

Outcomes for the organisation

- The organisation benefits that accrue from the individual benefits
- Better informed departmental planning (e.g. workloads, development plans, chance to spread best practice)
- The efforts of individuals more clearly focussed on departmental and institutional goals.

Why Staff Review and Development may go wrong

- Lack of commitment – “too busy”, bad planning, no value, low priority, seen as judgemental or threatening, scheme not promoted by senior managers
- Little or no briefing or training for the reviewers or reviewees

- Inappropriate reviewer
- Concern about bringing up problems due to fear of conflict
- Outcomes not implemented or lack of follow up to ensure the review is an integral feature of good management, not just a form filling exercise
- Objectives too vague or not measurable.

The Three Stages to the Review Process

- Prepare and plan
- Meeting
- Follow up

Prepare and plan

- Give plenty of notice. Agree a time and place.
- Encourage reviewee to prepare (use the self-review questions)
- Allow sufficient time and privacy for the meeting
- Review previous review forms, job objectives and personal information
- Check the key components of institutional, department or section plans as a basis for joint objective setting.
- Prepare for the meeting using the main job tasks and any previously agreed performance objectives.
- Consider such things as:
 - What are the main tasks of this employee's job?
 - Have they changed significantly during the past year?
 - How did he/she cope with any change?
 - Have any standards of performance been set against the main tasks? If so, were they met? If they were not, why not?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of the reviewee's performance on the evidence of the events of the year?
 - What objectives might you both agree for the coming review period?
 - Is there any aspect where more guidance or training or other experience would seem to be needed?
 - What opportunities might there be for the future?
- Have examples ready to substantiate comments on performance.
- Think about possible causes of any areas of poor performance.
- Think about ways your performance/behaviour might have frustrated your reviewee.

The Meeting

- Positive start to the meeting.
- Go through the reviewee's agenda (self-review)
 - Past – review of whole period including objectives
 - Present – current activities
 - Future – objectives and work plans
 - Other issues/concerns
- Let the reviewee talk freely about his/her own job and encourage self-assessment of perceived strengths and weaknesses. Weaknesses raised in this way will be more acceptable than those raised by you.
- If you have to raise points of weakness yourself, limit your criticisms to only two or three during the meeting.
- Use specific examples of good and bad work rather than broad generalisations.

- Do not wait until the formal review meeting to raise issues that should have been dealt with at the time.
- Use open questions to get coverage in breadth and ensure that the reviewee knows that you are interested and listening. Use closed questions to check facts.
- Take notes. Tell the reviewee that you are going to do this but avoid doing this when sensitive issues are being discussed.
- Ensure that the reviewee has an opportunity to cover all the points on his/her agenda or meeting preparation form. You should aim to be listening for at least 50% of the time.
- Agree job objectives and targets for the coming year.
- Use the meeting as an opportunity to discuss training and development needs and what help, if any, is required.
- Although they may well be mentioned, salary and promotion issues should not be the main theme of the meeting and they are not issues which can be worked through fully at this time. If they are identified to be discussed, a separate meeting should be arranged.
- Summarise at the end of each point and at the end of the meeting. Make sure that points of action are agreed and who is responsible for that action. Check that the reviewee has had an opportunity to complete his/her agenda.

Follow-up

- Write up your notes while they are fresh in your mind
- Complete the review form
- Undertake any follow-up actions agreed at the meeting.

How to set SMART objectives?

Clear objectives are key to the SRD scheme. They give a precise forecast of required achievements at some point in the future. By using the SMART formula, you can agree objectives with your reviewee knowing that they have been thoroughly thought through.

As far as possible encourage the reviewee to identify and own the objectives rather than imposing yours. That way they are likely to be more committed to them.

SMART objectives

Specific – what do you really want to do?

Sometimes we sabotage ourselves by setting enormous generalised goals and then wonder why we don't achieve them. A clear and concise objective has much more chance of success.

Measurable – how will you know when you have got there?

Referred to as 'success criteria'. You need some indicators that help you recognise the achievement of your objective.

Achievable – can you do it?

Will there be a feeling of accomplishment at the end? Reviewees tend to set unrealistically high objectives. They also tend to be highly critical of their own performance in meeting these objectives. Do not set too many – 3-4 in a year should be enough.

Relevant – who is it for?

Is it in the joint interests of the reviewee, the department and the University? A personal objective such as obtaining a qualification or learning a skill can be just as useful as a task objective directly related to the job description.

Time span – when will it be completed?

This may include long and short term objectives ranging from the next week to a number of years e.g. to open the restaurant on time tonight, to get a man on Mars by 2020. Without some forecast and checking mechanism, the objective can disappear under all the other pressures of work. A long term objective is likely to have a number of short term objectives within it.

An example of a SMART objective would be: *to set up and implement a schedule of laboratory safety inspections by July 2014. To have completed 4 inspections by September 2014.*