

# Guide to Career Development and Staff Appraisal (CDSA)

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This document should be read in conjunction with the CDSA Principles document.

## 1. What is a CDSA?

- A look back at goals attained and standards reached
- An assessment of strengths and development areas with a focus on personal contribution
- A look forward at short and long term objectives
- A review and identification of agreed development activities.

This process operates within the wider context of regular reviews of performance and development. These enable:

- Regular exchange of informal feedback
- Reassessment and revision of priorities
- Prompt recognition of achievements and issues to be addressed.

Together these provide the framework in which staff are supported and developed to help them fulfill their potential and optimise their contribution to the University's goals. It requires good working relationships between managers and staff and willingness on both sides to engage actively in a regular cycle of priority setting, personal development planning, ongoing reviews and the completion of an annual report. It is not just about line managers setting aside time for their staff but also about individuals taking responsibility for their own performance and development.

## 2. What are the benefits?

*For the University, it helps to:*

- Recognise and reward individuals' contributions
- Align the contribution of individuals to University goals
- Foster a culture where achievement and excellence are valued
- Build respect for individuals and value diversity
- Enhance capability for organisational learning and change
- Encourage accountable management.

*For managers/appraisers it provides opportunities to:*

- Set standards and clarify expectations
- Build effective working relationships between staff by giving and receiving constructive feedback
- Recognise the contribution of staff
- Improve your understanding of different perspectives
- Motivate staff
- Agree ways of improving performance.

For staff it allows time for:

- Reflecting on job role and purpose
- Reviewing workload and priorities
- Discussing needs for recognition, support and development
- Giving and receiving constructive feedback
- Building a good working relationship with your manager/appraiser.

### 3. Who conducts the CDSA?

CDSA's should normally be carried out by the staff member's line manager. Occasionally this may not be practical due to the number of staff reporting to an individual manager and in this situation, the line manager will agree with the Head of Unit on an alternative appraiser. The line manager will need direct input to that discussion in regard to that employee's objectives and performance and they will also need to see the final appraisal documents.

Line managers are expected to have continuous responsibility for all of their staff, to have an input to the formal process of CDSA and for ensuring the implementation of outcomes. It is recognised that line managers have responsibilities in relation to the appraisal of all their staff. These responsibilities are not restricted to those of their staff for whom they are directly designated as the formal appraiser. Appraisers will not be expected to appraise more than 10 staff annually.

Appraisees may ask for an alternative appraiser, giving reasons for their request. The Head of Unit should give this request reasonable consideration. This request should not be unreasonably refused. The Head of Unit will decide on the alternative appraiser, if the staff member is unhappy with the alternative, they may exercise the right to request another alternative.

Where there is a dual reporting line, there will be a need for the line manager to consult and involve the other manager as appropriate.

### 4. The key components of CDSA

The CDSA record form provides the structure of the meeting and the means of summarising the discussion. There are four main components:

- Review of achievements and objectives

The purpose of the review is to discuss and record the employee's objectives and achievements during the review period. Both appraiser and appraisee have responsibility for collecting evidence to inform this discussion.

- Engagement with Valued Ways of Working or the Leadership Competency Framework
  - As part of the annual CDSA discussion, appraisees will be expected to provide a *brief* summary of how they have used either Valued Ways of Working (VWW) or the Leadership Competency Framework (LCF) during the review period.
  - When using VWW, it is recommended that appraisees focus on the areas that are most significant to their role. An optional VWW Reflection Tool is provided to help appraisees think about how they have used VWW during the year.
  - When using LCF, appraisees will be expected to consider their performance against each of the competency themes. Both appraisees and appraisers will need to complete the LCF Reflection Tool separately *before* the CDSA discussion.

NB: The reflection tool is designed to stimulate conversation between appraiser and appraisee; it should not be attached to the CDSA record form.

- Setting objectives

The purpose of objective setting is to define the specific contribution expected of staff over the forthcoming review period (normally 12 months) and the tasks to be given the highest priority. This takes place within the context of university plans and priorities and day-to-day work demands and resource constraints. Outcomes may be expressed as SMART objectives (see below) or as project, action or workload plans as appropriate.

- Development planning

- The purpose of Personal Development Planning is to provide dedicated time for managers and staff to assess learning and development needs, explore ways of meeting them within resource and time constraints and generate commitment to undertake and support learning and growth.

- The CDSA record form is a supporting document that enables appraisees and appraisers to prepare for and record the CDSA discussion; they do not drive the process itself.

## 5. Steps towards an effective CDSA meeting

### *Preparation before the meeting:*

- Appraiser and appraisee should gather evidence of achievements and development activities undertaken during the review period
- Appraisee should consider how successful they have been in meeting their objectives for the review period
- Appraisee should consider how they have engaged with VWW or LCF during the review period
- Appraisee is encouraged to obtain feedback about their work from at least 3 colleagues. It is recommended that the appraisee seeks feedback from colleagues with whom they have worked most closely during the year, who will be in a position to provide specific feedback on the appraisee's contribution. Feedback can either be solicited by the appraisee or appraiser (with the appraisee's consent). Individuals submitting written comments should be aware that the appraisee will see their comments
- Appraiser should obtain relevant details about team, departmental and strategic priorities to inform the objective-setting discussion
- Appraisee should consider any development they may require during the coming year
- Appraiser and appraisee should agree an agenda and decide who will draft the CDSA record form.

*The appraisee may also find it helpful to consider the following before the CDSA discussion:*

- In general, what have been your main achievements over the last CDSA period?
- Which parts of your current job do you most and least enjoy?
- Identify any areas in which you feel you could further develop your skills/knowledge/experience in order to meet your objectives and development needs. How might these be developed?
- Are there any additional responsibilities you would like to take on or areas of work you would like to become involved in over the next 12 months?
- Do you have any plans for future career development?

*Things to consider when reviewing objectives and achievements:*

- Evidence of achievement in meeting agreed objectives and other examples of excellent performance (e.g. from employee's achievement log, observation by manager, feedback from other colleagues or customers)
- 360° feedback or other assessment against core and functional capabilities
- Evidence of specific learning outcomes (e.g. from employee's Learning Log, observation or feedback)
- Updated CV, recording work and professional achievements
- Evidence of commitment to equality and diversity
- A retrospective review of work plans and the time allocated against key activities and any adjustments needed for the future
- Actions and priorities to be carried forward to the next review period.

*Things to consider when setting objectives:*

- Making explicit links to team, departmental and strategic priorities
- Consistency with workload, professional development and study leave plans to ensure that individuals are able to maximise their contribution without being overloaded
- Recognising *what* needs to be done and *how* (linking to OU Values and Capabilities)
- Building in specific responsibilities for equality and diversity
- Building in sufficient flexibility to allow for later reprioritisation as necessary
- Making objectives SMART:
  - Specific** – is it clear what has to be achieved?
  - Measurable** – how will outcomes be defined in terms of quantity, quality, cost?
  - Achievable** – will it stretch without causing overload?
  - Relevant** – how will it contribute to team or departmental goals?
  - Time bound** – when are outputs to be delivered?

*Things to consider when development planning:*

- Building in sufficient flexibility to allow for later reprioritisation as necessary
- Objectives agreed for the forthcoming review period
- The University's Valued Ways of Working and Leadership Competency Frameworks
- Feedback from colleagues and customers
- Career aspirations and potential

It is essential that appraisers have the relevant skills and knowledge to facilitate effective appraisals and they will be required to undertake development, as appropriate.

Individuals who have received training or gained experience of appraisals from a previous employer can refer to the CDSA guidance notes and seek coaching from their manager and/or colleagues to familiarise themselves with the approach of their Unit.

## **6. Confidentiality and record keeping**

Only the appraiser, appraisee and Head of Unit (or nominee) should have a copy of the CDSA record form and all have a responsibility for ensuring the contents remain confidential. If the line manager does not undertake the CDSA for operational reasons, they will still be expected to input to the CDSA and agree on the final document, subject to the principles agreed on record-keeping (see above). The Head of Unit (or nominee) will review the outcomes agreed at the CDSA and may need to amend as appropriate depending on the availability of resources and consideration of unit priorities.

Heads of Unit have access to all staff records for their staff and a new line manager within a Section/Unit should have access to CDSA records completed by their predecessors for their appraisees. If a member of staff changes post within a Unit, their new line manager/appraiser will have access to their CDSA records.

Three appraisal records may be stored by appraisers and Heads of Units, the earliest record of the three being destroyed when the latest record is agreed.

## **7. Relationship between CDSA and promotion**

When a promotion case is put forward, the Head of Unit and appraisee will agree a summary of the CDSA, focusing on areas which give evidence of suitability for promotion. If a summary cannot be agreed, then two summaries may be submitted by the Head of Unit and the appraisee.

## **8. Useful references**

- All internal staff CDSA record – summary
- All internal staff CDSA record - objectives
- All internal staff CDSA record – personal development plan
- All internal staff – complete version of CDSA record
- Associate lecturer CDSA record
- CDSA guidance
- CDSA guidance for Associate Lecturers
- CDSA principles
- CDSA policy
- Feedback form 3+2
- Leadership Competency Framework guidance
- Leadership Competency Framework reflection tool
- Valued Ways of Working Framework
- Valued Ways of Working Framework guidance
- Valued Ways of Working reflection tool