

Guide to using Valued Ways of Working for Academics in Career Development and Staff Appraisals

1. Background and context of the framework

The Valued Ways of Working framework (VWW) has been developed for academics, as part of the Open University's people and culture focus area, to help enhance the capabilities of the University by improving institutional and individual performance.

The University embodies a set of core values that make it a most distinctive institution in higher education. The VWW framework aligns directly with these core values, which are to be inclusive, innovative and responsive, and places these in the context of professional values and associated professional behaviours that distinguish effective performance within the higher education sector (UKPSF, 2011; AUA, 2009).^{1,2}

The framework presents indicative examples of behaviours that individuals are expected to demonstrate in carrying out their academic roles effectively, providing a clear steer on professional values that will help to deliver the University's strategic mission. These valued ways of working are not tasks associated with a particular role, but instead identify how an individual performs in their role and are therefore universal across all academic roles (although some may be more important in certain roles than in others e.g. in leadership roles). VWW for Academics is therefore the foundation for expression and promotion of the University's core values and professional behaviours for all academics.³

2. Enhancing individual capabilities and performance

The VWW framework is offered as a positive tool for self evaluation and reflection, to be used as part of the CDSA process to help you identify how you currently perform within your academic role, and to consider how you could further develop your capabilities to maximise your productivity and individual performance. The framework is intended to support a culture of continuous improvement through raising awareness in a positive, open (collegiate and constructive) way, fostering trust and mutual respect. It will specifically enable you to identify the professional behaviours and skills that are relevant to your performance at different stages of your professional career; focus on behaviours that will improve performance; help you to recognise ways to build upon and maximise existing strengths and identify any development needs. The framework will also enable you to seek constructive feedback from, as well as provide constructive feedback to colleagues.

3. Enhancing institutional capabilities and performance

Evaluation of the use of this framework within the University indicates improvements in (i) the quality of CDSA, line management discussions and objective setting, (ii) increased confidence in giving and receiving constructive feedback, (iii) enhanced team working practices and cohesion through team development, and (iv) supported recruitment of people who embody the values of the University.

4. Use of VWW for Academics in CDSA

As preparation for your CDSA discussion with your appraiser/line manager, please complete the Valued Ways of Working reflection tool. This is designed to help stimulate a conversation between you and your appraiser/line manager about how you have performed in your role and consider how you have engaged with the framework during the previous year. Please provide specific examples related to your role. You may wish to focus on the valued ways of working that are most significant to you in your academic role (i.e. those which you consider have the greatest impact on what you do). Identify any areas (including development needs) that you would like to explore further during your CDSA discussion.

You are also encouraged to seek independent feedback from at least three colleagues with whom you have worked closely, to gain insight into how they have viewed your performance or contribution within a specified setting or role during the past year. These colleagues may include academic as well as non-academic staff (e.g. module team chairs, programme directors, research centre directors, staff tutors, curriculum managers, student services colleagues etc.). Feedback can either be solicited by yourself or on your behalf by your appraiser/line manager (with your consent).

Please use the (3+2) feedback process for this purpose, in conjunction with the Valued Ways of Working for Academics, to obtain comments on specific tasks as well as performance related to professional behaviours associated with those tasks. Feedback need not be restricted to using a specific form and can be received as free text via e-mail, as long as this provides clear context, and enables you to identify both your strengths as well as areas for improvement. Independent feedback from colleagues that is open, transparent, objective, constructive and collegiate (in line with the VWW framework) is integral to valued ways of working, which will help inform your CDSA discussions with your appraiser/line manager and can be included in the CDSA record.

5. Useful references

- Valued Ways of Working for Academics
- Valued Ways of Working Reflection Tool
- Feedback Form (3+2)
- Professional Behaviours Expected of Individuals in HEIs - further examples
- Examples of Behaviours that Suggest a Development Need

¹UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education (UKPSF, Higher Education Academy, 2011); ²CPD Model of Professional Behaviours that Distinguish Effective Performance in Higher Education Institutions (Association of University Administrators, 2009); representation from 48 HEIs including the Open University were involved in generating this framework; ³The VWW for Academics framework was developed through consultation with Academic Focus Groups, Faculties and Units, the Deans' Group, Human Resources and the People and Culture Steering Group at the Open University (2011-2012); this revised framework is based on the Open University's Core Values and Capabilities Framework (2002), the AUA CPD Framework Model (AUA, 2009), and has been mapped to the UKPSF (2011) and the Open University's Leadership Competency Framework (LCF, 2012).