

## **PERFORMANCE RATINGS AND ON LINE SYSTEMS**

Brief summary of the discussion at a meeting held on Wednesday 21 August 2013 at the Learning & Development Centre, University of the West of England, Bristol

### **1. Welcome**

Present: Alison O'Reilly (Cardiff Met), Helen Doyle (Newcastle), Linda Robinson (Newcastle), Emma Loten (Portsmouth), Angie Allcock (Bath), Karen Lichfield (Nott Trent), Gemma Gabriel (UCreative), Steve Rathborn (Imperial), Karen Carter (Gloucester), Ellie Hartrup (Bath Spa), Ann Kimbley (Wolv), Caroline Bryant (Regents), Frances Grebenc (Edinburgh), Claire Lambert (Exeter), Alison Price (Cranfield), Frank Jordan (Northampton), Janet Cattini (South Bank), Carlene Rogers (Simitive/University of Bristol), Pam Fitzsimmons (UWE), Rachel Myrea (UWE)

### **2. Review of activities - all**

Experiences were shared:

- 2.1 Concerns were expressed that the process and forms (and updating the forms) can become the main focus of PDR when the quality of the conversation at the meeting is the most critical.
- 2.2 There had been an emphasis on counting the number of PDR meetings taking place in HEIs but it was agreed that the quality of the meeting that was more important and this also needed to be monitored.
- 2.3 In some cases different forms were used for different staff groups but in other HEIs there was one form for all.
- 2.4 There was a balance needed between performance and development in the PDR.
- 2.5 Linking objectives to values and key behaviours was felt to be very important to the success of the process.
- 2.6 Managers needed to attend PDR training and this was compulsory in some universities and others were moving towards compulsory training.
- 2.7 SMART objectives had been introduced by some.
- 2.8 Successful implementation and roll out had been achieved by one HEI through the Head of Service leading all of the PDR briefings.
- 2.9 One HEI was introduce a new rating system with the intention of linking this to pay in 2014.
- 2.10 Where contribution pay existed already there was a view that this had increased the uptake of PDR meetings.
- 2.11 Historically, implementation of PDR by professional staff was generally good. However academic staff uptake had been less so across many institutions.
- 2.12 Performance review was mandatory for some universities but not all.
- 2.13 An effective behaviours framework was being rolled out in one HEI. All agreed that the HOW was particularly important when reviewing achievement, hence it was important not to just consider WHAT had been achieved.
- 2.14 It was important that managers understood the need to focus on giving effective feedback and highlighting strengths.

- 2.15 Research did not indicate that performance-related pay leads to greater effectiveness so there was concern that there appeared to be a growing interest in this across the sector.
- 2.16 Work was taking place in one HEI to develop a motivational framework which would give staff autonomy for achieving their objectives, it was felt that this approach fitted well within the academic environment.
- 2.17 One HEI had a strategy to encourage employees to make a difference socially outside of the university and this would be considered at the PDR review.
- 2.18 Behaviours for leaders and managers had been incorporated into other processes such as advertising, recruitment, etc.
- 2.19 One manager has been surprised to be advised that it was fine to 'care' about staff!
- 2.20 Project Juno and Athena Swan – with these initiatives around the sector it was becoming more important to have effective PDR and quality conversations with staff.
- 2.21 Some people had trialled the central collection of data relating to development needs but this had not been successful because of the extent of the information gathered and the resource needed to manage it.
- 2.22 For some HEIs there was no central collection of data, just a report to HR to confirm that appraisals has been carried out.
- 2.23 360° reviews were not part of formal appraisal systems in most HEIs but were carried out in some and proving valuable.
- 2.24 'Finding Potential', 'AM Azure', were potential providers of 360° reviews systems.
- 2.25 Sandra Morson was being used as a coach for senior managers in one HEI and had worked with them to develop the 360 process.
- 2.26 It was suggested that senior managers who had completed a 360° review should be encouraged to share what they had learnt.
- 2.27 There was a concern that HR could have a 'policing' role which was not useful.
- 2.28 It was important to have commitment from senior management before implementing a review or new scheme.

### **3. What do we know about ratings schemes that have been implemented elsewhere?**

Various handouts were circulated and round table discussions followed:

- 3.1 There was a concern about subjectivity which could be a massive barrier to using effectively.
- 3.2 Emphasise needs to be put on 'how' and behaviours, the objectives might not matter so much.
- 3.3 There was a view that as quality conversations were not happening yet, ratings would not necessarily be accurate.
- 3.4 The focus of the PDR in some cases was development and hence the process had not really been a review of performance, it was therefore very difficult to introduce ratings
- 3.5 How honest will people be regarding their performance if pay is involved?
- 3.6 There was a suggestion that performance and development discussions could take place separately (with a suitable gap between meetings) so that an individual had an opportunity to implement development actions in time for any performance-related pay discussions.
- 3.7 A rating scheme was likely to be subjective.
- 3.8 Where competency frameworks were being used they were for developmental purposes and separate from performance review.
- 3.9 It was important that staff still had an opportunity to consider their career aspirations as part of their PDR.
- 3.10 Ongoing 1-2-1 reviews were an essential part of performance management.
- 3.11 Introduction of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) with 3-monthly monitoring meetings was being considered.

- 3.12 A concern was expressed about whether the introduction of KPIs could create a conflict in terms of where effort was focussed and hence this affected the achievement of day to day activities.
- 3.13 Some were using student feedback as part of the evidence to review performance. There was a discussion about how reliable this feedback was and if the feedback was poor what was this assessment based on.

#### **4. What is the current thinking on rating performance and pay related performance?**

Rachel Myrea talked through the items in her handout (attached)

#### **5. What might an on line appraisal system look like?**

5.1 Carlene Rogers demonstrated the on line appraisal system that had been developed for the University of Bristol. This was using Simitive.

- One form to apply to everybody, but could be tailored to different groups.
- Simple form, that could be completed on line
- Senior manager comments could be sought
- Interim review form at six months
- Reporting on each of the elements within the form was possible, so rates of completion could be assessed
- It would also be possible to report on objectives set
- Road shows were taking place before it going live and links to HR website were available so staff could find out more information
- System was flexible so could be adjusted according to needs
- Bristol were not using the objective setting module at this stage

5.2 Frank Jordan from Northampton demonstrated his university's performance review form – 'Raising the Bar' – with a slideshow presentation. Frank agreed to circulate his presentation to the group afterwards (attached).