



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

APPRAISAL GUIDANCE NOTES
ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH STAFF
2011-2013

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GUIDANCE NOTES FOR THE APPRAISAL SCHEME FOR ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH STAFF

(1.0) INTRODUCTION

Appraisal involves the appraiser and the member of staff in appraising and planning the work and training needs of the member of staff within the overall context of the University College's strategy. It is an essential part of the University College's commitments to developing its staff and to delivering a high quality service in the generic areas of teaching and learning, research/scholarly activity, leadership, management and administration, college activities/community contribution and income generation. Academic and research staff work in a variety of different organisational contexts. The University College appraisal scheme has been designed and developed to accommodate such diversity. Accordingly, the academic and research staff appraisal form is intended to be used in a flexible manner and completed in a way which reflects the staff member's career stage and job content.

Among other things, the appraisal system ensures that individual members of staff are clear about their responsibilities and have an opportunity to discuss any help they may need in meeting those responsibilities. Good quality appraisal is based on the principle that people are more effective when they can agree what is expected of them and receive feedback on how they are doing.

The emphasis is on a positive and constructive dialogue between appraisee and appraiser. Whilst the appraisal interview will be conducted on a biennial basis, it is intended that an **informal interview midway through the period between appraiser and appraisee** will help facilitate the achievement of objectives.

(1.1) PURPOSES OF APPRAISAL

Appraisal:

1. Provides an opportunity for appraising, in a positive and constructive way, the previous period's work, and how this has been carried out.
2. Ensures that the individual's contribution to the University College is recognised, and that specific objectives are agreed for the coming two years.
3. Provides the link between the individual's work and the objectives of the University College.
4. Helps guide the allocation of staff development resources.
5. Ensures that staff are clear about what is expected of them.
6. Provides opportunities for the discussion of training needs for their current role.
7. Allows appraiser and appraisee to look at development for future career opportunities and, as appropriate, to discuss promotion prospects.

8. Allows for the identification and discussion of difficulties or obstacles, which hamper effectiveness.
9. Provides a means of integrating the ambitions and personal needs of the individual with the overall objectives of the University College as a whole (see also 3 above).
10. Facilitates two-way communication between appraiser and appraisee.

(1.2) BENEFITS

(1.2.1) For the individual, appraisal can offer:

1. The opportunity to take stock, looking backward and forward in a constructive way.
2. Access to an appraiser with helpful experience and valuable feedback to offer.
3. Positive encouragement and recognition of achievement.
4. Greater focus on: career pathways, access to development, improved understanding of the context of his/her research, teaching etc.

(1.2.2) For the Department, appraisal can offer:

1. Improved communications.
2. An opportunity to identify problem areas at the individual level.
3. Clarification of roles and responsibilities.
4. An opportunity to draw on the ideas of all staff.

(1.2.3) For the institution as a whole, appraisal can offer:

1. Improved overall performance through more effective staff.
2. Greater focus of staff activities on the University College mission and objectives.
3. Better value for money, since staff development resources can be targeted at identified needs.
4. More open styles of management and leadership.

5. The chance to influence collective values and implement strategy.
6. Opportunities for organisational learning.

(1.3) EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the above benefits, appraisal has an overall contribution to make in forwarding the equal opportunities policies of the institution, principally by ensuring fair and equal access to, and participation in, meaningful development.

(1.4) OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The University College has agreed the following principles in the operation of the scheme:

1. The process is intended to be open and two-way between the appraiser and the member of staff. It is a mutual discussion, starting from self-assessment, not a top-down judgement.
2. The process is where possible evidence based.
3. The content of the discussion is confidential to the two people concerned; however, the Head of Department and the Principal will have access to the appraisal document. As appropriate, relevant information **may** be used by the appraisee to provide evidence for bids for promotion and discretionary pay.
4. The process is not a substitute for day to day management.
5. All appraisal processes will be conducted in the spirit of the University College's Equal Opportunities Policy, and will emphasise the principle of development.
6. All staff, whether full or part-time, will be covered, and the process will be conducted in a consistent way irrespective of grade or status.
7. The agreed outcomes from the process should be actively kept under review and implemented within the Department/College.
8. Training will be provided for appraisers and briefing on the scheme for appraisees.
9. The process is rooted firmly within the University College's overall strategy; is objectives based and provides for individual, departmental and College development within this context.
10. Objectives will be agreed within the generic areas of teaching and learning, research/scholarly activity, leadership, management and administration, college activities/community contribution and income generation.

11. The scheme will be reviewed regularly, in consultation with the College branch of the University & College Union (UCU).

(1.5) A SUMMARY OF THE OPERATING PROCEDURE

1. Although the appraisal meeting will take place at least twice-yearly, the appraisal needs to be seen as part of a continuing process of communication and departmental and College development. This means that it cannot be treated as an isolated event. It is therefore essential that there should be at least one informal follow-up meeting half way through the two-year period, which will be initiated by the appraiser.
2. The Principal is responsible for establishing the structure for supporting appraisal and for ensuring the completion of the process within the timetable outlined on the first page of the appraisal form.
3. Consistency in the application of the principles of appraisal will be achieved through monitoring by the Principal.
4. After individual appraisals have been completed, personal development plans will be reviewed at College level, so that training and development needs may be prioritised. A summary of these will be passed to the appropriate personnel.

(2.0) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE APPRAISAL PROCESS

(2.1) PRINCIPAL

In relation to all staff the Principal will:

- 1 Create the structure to support appraisal in the College.
- 2 Nominate appraisers and act as countersigning officer.
- 3 Ensure consistency and fairness in the application of appraisal principles across the College.
- 4 Co-ordinate all personal development plans and produce an overall summary of development and training needs within the College.
- 5 Ensure that the prioritising of development needs may take place.
- 6 Ensure that all staff are briefed on overall University College plans.
- 7 Ensure appraisals take place within the correct timeframe.

- 8 Ensure that equality of opportunity is applied.
- 9 Keep appraisal records.

(2.2) THE COUNTERSIGNING OFFICER

The Principal will be the countersigning officer for all staff within the College. S/he will ensure that there is a relationship between objective setting for the individual, the department and the College.

The Principal, as countersigning officer, will:

- 1 Act as arbitrator if agreement cannot be reached between appraiser and appraisee.
- 2 Ensure that all processes have been followed by the appraisers, as required.

(2.3) THE APPRAISER

Appraisers are nominated by the Principal, bearing in mind the following guidance:

Appraisers:

- 1 Should be conversant with the context within which the appraisee works.
- 2 Will have a good knowledge of the appropriate level at which objectives should be agreed; and where appropriate how these should relate to the development of the profile for promotion.
- 3 Will be an experienced colleague, who will have developed an understanding of career development issues; will have standing within the College, so that he/she can seek to influence access to development opportunities.
- 4 Will have no conflict of interest with the appraisee.

It is hoped that one appraiser should be suitable for the appraisal of the full spectrum of the appraisee's work/portfolio.

The Principal should endeavour, as far as possible, to achieve a composition of the appraisers' group which is reflective of the diversity of the Northern Ireland community.

It is a requirement that all those nominated as appraisers should receive full training on the system and how to operate it.

The appraiser is responsible for:

- 1 Initiating the appraisal process.
- 2 Facilitating informal follow-up throughout the two-year period with the appraisee to discuss progression towards achievement of targets for performance and personal development.
- 3 Ensuring that all the documentation is complete and forwarded for record keeping.
- 4 Ensuring that the objectives set are reasonable and reflect an appropriate balance in the individual's portfolio.

There is provision for a choice of appraiser should a member of staff, for good reason, feel unhappy with the person suggested by the Principal or feel that an alternative individual would be more appropriate. In these circumstances it is recommended that an alternative be agreed by discussion with the Principal or, if necessary, in consultation with the Human Resources Officer.

(3.0) ACCESS TO AND STORAGE OF DOCUMENTS

Approved documents may be accessed by:

1. The Principal
2. The relevant Departmental Head

Records of all appraisals will be held by the Principal, normally for six years and destroyed thereafter.

(4.0) ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS CRITERIA AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO APPRAISAL

The promotions criteria set the context for individual career development and are also rooted in the generic areas of teaching and learning, research/scholarly activity, leadership, management and administration, college activities/community contribution and income generation.

Part B of the appraisal form encourages individual staff members, when appropriate, to consider their career-based objectives, while Part C requires appraiser and appraisee to draw together a statement summarising the individual's progression toward career goals. In agreeing career objectives, appraiser and appraisee should refer to the profile/s for promotion. The profiles may help determine KEY AREAS for development.

The appraisee may decide to use relevant information from his/her appraisal form to support an application for promotion, or an application for a discretionary payment. The summary information on the review section of the documentation should therefore be unambiguous.

(5.0) OUTCOMES OF APPRAISAL

- (5.1) In most cases the outcome of appraisal will be a satisfactory one with the agreement of a set of new objectives for the incoming cycle and an agreed statement about the achievements of the previous one.
- (5.2) On a few occasions, agreement may not be achieved and may result in the need for arbitration, the procedure for which is outlined in Section 7.

(6.0) SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

(6.1) ABSENCE DUE TO ILL HEALTH

- (6.1.1) Long-term absence may make it impossible to carry out an appraisal in any formal sense.
- (6.1.2) Short periods of certified sick leave should be taken into account during appraisal in terms of what could have been realistically achieved within the reduced time-frame. A note should be made on the form to record either the modification to the objectives or an explanation of the underachievement.

(6.2) STAFF ON LEAVE

Any person away for more than six months within the appraisal period will not be required to participate in appraisal for that year. However, for those staff on sabbatical leave, a copy of the sabbatical report must be passed to the appropriate line manager. If the period of leave is for six months or less, a review should be carried out for the period spent in the University College.

(6.3) TEMPORARY HOLDING OF POSTS

If the period of office is for twelve months, the appraisal should include consideration of the duties attached to the role. If less, then the member of staff should be appraised within his/her substantive role, including consideration of the temporary post.

(6.4) MATERNITY LEAVE

Prior to maternity leave, an appraisal should be carried out and the cycle should recommence on return, with new objectives being agreed.

(6.5) APPRAISER BREAK IN SERVICE/NEW APPRAISER

The onus is on the countersigning officer, i.e. the Principal, to ensure that the appraisal takes place.

(7.0) APPEALING AN OUTCOME OF APPRAISAL

What if there is disagreement?

The object of all appraisal discussions is to achieve agreement, taking into consideration the viewpoint of both appraiser and appraisee, and the appraisal meeting should emphasise this principle throughout. However, if agreement cannot be reached on what should be recorded, appraiser and appraisee should seek the help of the countersigning officer, i.e. the Principal, who will arbitrate between them.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE SYSTEM

- (1) The Principal identifies:**
 - Appraiser/appraisee responsibilities.
- (2)** Appraisers and appraisees familiarise themselves with University College plans.
- (3)** Appraisers and appraisees prepare (individually) parts A and B of the appraisal form.
- (4)** The appraisal meeting takes place, and agreement is reached by appraiser and appraisee on the content of all parts of the form.
- (5)** The form is passed to the countersigning officer, i.e. the Principal, by the appraiser.
- (6)** The Principal reviews the form, signs it, and it is returned via the appraiser to the appraisee for his/her signature.
- (7)** The Principal completes a summary of staff development needs across the College.
- (8)** The Principal prioritises development needs.
- (9)** The above is passed to the appropriate personnel.

APPENDIX TWO

Stages in Appraisal:

Stage	Content	Process
<p>Stage One: Planning Preparing for the discussion using Parts A and B</p>	<p>A review of the achievement of objectives (including gathering of evidence of success) and planning for the coming two years.</p>	<p>Parts A and B are completed by the appraisee and passed to the appraiser. The appraiser is recommended to plan for the discussion by considering the information contained in the form. By doing so, both will be able to list what they would like to discuss at the interview.</p>
<p>Stage Two: The Interview</p>	<p>Both the appraiser and appraisee discuss the achievement of objectives and plan for the coming two years.</p>	<p>Parts A and B are discussed by appraisee and appraiser.</p>
<p>Stage Three: Outcomes Recording the decisions and outcomes from the meeting using Part C</p>	<p>The decisions from the discussion are recorded. These include action plans and training needs but not the conversation itself.</p>	<p>Parts A and B are finalised and Part C completed by the appraiser and signed by both parties. The appraiser passes the form to the countersigning officer for his/her signature. He/she will return the form for retention by appraiser and appraisee.</p>
<p>Stage Four: College response Informing Staff and Student Services that the process is complete.</p>	<p>The Principal confirms that the process is completed and identifies any training needs needing central action.</p>	<p>Principal co-ordinates all Parts B and C of the forms to an overall prioritised College summary which is forwarded to the appropriate personnel.</p>

APPENDIX THREE

PREPARING FOR AN APPRAISAL

APPRAISEE

1. During each year, keep your objectives up to date through discussions with your appraiser, and review regularly what evidence you will present during appraisal.
2. When you receive or access the form, complete Parts A and B online and e-mail to the appraiser.
3. Consider what personal development needs you may have for the next two years.
4. Consider what you want to discuss in your appraisal and make notes.
5. Consider areas in which you hope to receive feedback.
6. Pass the form to your appraiser one week before the review.

You may find it helpful to consider these questions during preparation:

- How have things changed in my job?
- What did I achieve?
- What prevented me from achieving what I wanted to?
- Which aspects of my job give most satisfaction?
- What does my past performance tell me about my strengths?
- What does it tell me about my weaknesses?
- What then are my development needs?
- Do I have skills, which are being under-used at present?
- In thinking ahead, what are my career interests?
- Are there ways in which things could be better organised for me?
- Are there ways in which greater efficiency could be gained?

7. Consult the guidance on objective setting in Appendix Four and think about your own objectives for the two years ahead.

8. Remember that your next appraisal will be based on the objectives you agree now.

APPRAISER

1. Your appraisee may need help in setting objectives.
2. Make sure that you have reviewed the guidance on objective setting in Appendix Four before the appraisal interview.
3. Ensure that all those appraisees for whom you have responsibility are aware of University College plans and objectives.
4. Ensure that sufficient discussion about the progression towards achievement of objectives has taken place throughout the period.
5. Gather evidence related to the achievement of objectives to support your views of the appraisee's performance.
6. On receipt of the appraisee's form, prepare notes on Parts A and B and consider how Part A relates to Part C.
7. Be clear about what feedback you wish to give to the appraisee and prepare notes for the discussion.
8. Prepare notes on the objectives that you would like to discuss with the appraisee for the next two years and consider the support you can offer to assist him/her.
9. It is the role of the appraiser to ensure that the appraisee's objectives are consistent with the University College's plans.
10. Consider your appraisee's level of development and consult the promotions profiles in relation to the developments you wish to discuss with the appraisee. Think about how you may assist him/her regarding any non-achievements from the previous period and how you may support him/her with the plans for the next one.
11. Arrange a time and place for the interview, ensure that there will be no interruptions and if necessary make any special arrangements.

APPENDIX FOUR

THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

As a matter of good practice both parties should set aside two hours for the appraisal interview.

The interview is divided into three parts:

- (1) Reviewing past performance and agreeing a summary statement.
- (2) Agreeing new objectives for the next two years.
- (3) Agreeing a personal development plan.

(1) Reviewing Performance

The emphasis in reviewing performance is on giving constructive feedback based on evidence and on encouraging reflective learning on the part of the appraisee.

1. First the appraiser should explain the format of the interview.
2. Both discuss Part A. The appraiser should lead discussion by using open questions and affording the appraisee the opportunity to provide full responses drawing on the available evidence.
3. The appraisee should be allowed an opportunity to make some points in summary.
4. If the appraiser feels that he/she disagrees with the appraisee's perceptions, he/she should ask questions which focus the discussion on evidence of achievements, with a view to encouraging reflection on the part of the appraisee.
5. The appraiser should be specific in summary about his/her own views, and, should make comments supported by evidence at appropriate points in the discussion.
6. All discussion should take place with the objective of reaching an agreed view.
7. Appraisers should actively encourage comments and questions from the appraisee and, ensure that there are key point summaries made throughout the discussion.
8. In giving feedback, it is important to highlight good performance and seek to have a balance in the discussion. The emphasis is on constructive feedback, on the basis of which the appraisee can develop. Negative criticism should be avoided and will only have the effect of shutting down communication.
9. By the end of discussion both should be able to agree a statement for Part C.
10. The appraiser should invite the appraisee to make his/her own comments at the end of Part C.
11. If the appraiser and appraisee agree any development needs, plans to address the issues should be recorded on Part C.

Advice on Good Practice

1. Check out how your appraisee feels about the process.
2. Check out all major concerns.
3. Use open questions to encourage discussion.
4. Check out understanding often.
5. Do not make comparisons.
6. Summarise often.
7. Be sure you have agreement before moving on to another topic.
8. Use closed questions to confirm agreement (or otherwise).
9. Avoid stating opinions.
10. Seek to make the seating arrangement relaxed.
11. Take notes.
12. Ensure there are no interruptions.
13. Make any special arrangements if required.

(2) Agreeing new objectives

Guidance Notes for Objective Setting

Why set objectives?

To ensure the achievement of University College objectives by involving all staff in developing and agreeing with their appraisers key objectives.

To gain the commitment of staff to the achievement of those objectives.

To provide a benchmark against which individual performance can be measured.

To enhance staff motivation by setting clear, challenging objectives.

To assist staff in gaining the necessary experience and achievements to support promotion applications.

To ensure that academic staff are all working towards achieving a balanced portfolio of activities – in teaching and learning, research/scholarly activity, leadership, management and administration, college activities/community contribution and income generation – appropriate to the point they are at in their career.

Objective Setting in the Academic Staff Appraisal Scheme

Setting of individual objectives will be initiated by appraisers and appraisees every two years to integrate with the University College's activities and objectives.

Staff objectives will be recorded by the appraisee and appraiser and will become the primary yardstick against which the appraisee's progress and achievement will be monitored and assessed.

Appraisers, along with the Principal and the relevant Head of Department, will be responsible for guiding staff towards the achievement of objectives, and for revising objectives where necessary due to unforeseen circumstances or changed priorities.

What Makes a Good Objective?

Objectives set should clearly indicate what achievement is expected at the end of the period. Motivation will be enhanced if the appraisee is responsible for deciding how the objective will be achieved. It is important, if commitment to objectives is to be gained, that the process is seen as reasonable and fair, and that autonomy is given on "how to get there".

Objective setting must include the totality of the job, otherwise the risk exists that a person may focus on the more limited set objectives to the detriment of everything else. In practice this will require individuals setting objectives which reflect the University College's Mission – aiming for achievement across the four key areas of University College activity, to a level appropriate to their academic area, position in their career and their personal circumstances.

The acronym SMART is used as guidance for setting good objectives:

Specific: Objectives must express the action and results required so that both appraiser and appraisee can see clearly whether or not the objective has been achieved. The aim of objective setting can only be achieved with clear understanding of the objectives set, and for this reason it is important that objectives be unambiguous, clear and easy to understand.

Measurable: When setting objectives, there must be some way of measuring and verifying whether the objective has been achieved, and to what level. The objective should not be open-ended: both appraisee and appraiser need to know whether it has been achieved, and if not, how close have they got to achieving it.

Achievable: Although they should provide challenge and development to the individual, objectives also must be achievable. Setting objectives which clearly cannot be achieved, or can only be achieved if circumstances change materially will not aid the individual's motivation.

Realistic: The objectives must be realistic and relevant: to the level at which the individual is at in their career; to the priorities and workload of their particular area.

Timed: Objectives need to have clear time frames attached to them. Although the appraisal process is, at present, biennial, objectives can be set for longer time frames. This may be particularly appropriate for research-based objectives where objectives may be set for longer periods but reviewed at least on a biennial basis.

Types of Objective

Improvement: doing something we already do, but doing it "better". SMART objectives will make it clear specifically what element will be "better", how it will be done, to what level improvement should be reached and by when.

Maintenance: doing something at the same standard. These types of objectives are relevant where the core of what an individual does, is to carry out the same activity, but perhaps within changed circumstances, such as: reduced resources. In this case a maintenance objective of carrying out the same activity to the same standard, but with reduced inputs would be stretching and would contribute to University College improvements.

Development: doing something completely new, or developing an existing activity into a new direction. Here the reviewer needs to ensure the objective is still relevant to the University College's plans and helps the individual work towards a balanced portfolio of achievement.

Discussing and Agreeing Objectives in the Appraisal Meeting

Objectives must be agreed by both parties to gain maximum commitment and ownership

Prior to the appraisal meeting, the appraisee should complete Part B of the appraisal form by preparing their proposed objectives for the two years ahead as the basis for discussion in the meeting. If they do not feel ready to define objectives, they should at least summarise those broad areas in which they believe objectives should be set.

The appraisee will pass their draft of Part B to the appraiser who will review the objectives to ensure that they:

contribute to Unit objectives,
are consistent with range of activities which the individual is undertaking,
are appropriate to the individual and the stage they are at in their career.

The appraiser will record his / her perceptions of, and reactions to, the draft proposals on their copy of the form.

The appraiser will need to review the proposed objectives against the promotion profiles to ask:
Are the objectives appropriate to the appraisee's **current** grade?
Would they assist the appraisee in demonstrating evidence of achievement to support application to promotion to the **next** grade?

The appraiser should start by explaining overall University College objectives or current developments relevant to the individual. There should be a discussion of previous objectives and how they have been achieved in order to relate future objectives to past achievement.

The appraiser leads the individual from an understanding of the broad areas in which the individual should concentrate his / her efforts towards an identification of precise work objectives to which they can be committed.

It should be stressed throughout the meeting that objectives will form the basis of appraisal of performance, so the appraisee fully understands their importance.

The number of objectives set should normally be limited to a maximum of six or seven in total, five or six being the most usual. They need in total to represent a fair and reasonable challenge to the individual. The aim is to focus attention where it will make difference. If there are too many objectives it will make it difficult to focus on the issues which really make the difference.

The appraiser should review with the individual any major obstacle to achieving overall objectives, explaining, wherever appropriate, any assistance available in overcoming the obstacles. These should form the basis of discussion of Part C of the form: "Setting the Agenda".

The appraiser should make it clear to the appraisee that the objectives will be used as a basis for mentoring and guidance and that objectives may be amended or modified to reflect changes which may occur during the period. It is important for these reasons that regular review meetings take place and progress is closely and regularly monitored.

Evidence of Achievement of Objectives

For an objective to be measurable, it is important to determine at the outset how it will be measured – ie the evidence that will be provided to demonstrate achievement. This should form an integral part of the objective – setting process.

There are some basic guidelines to follow when considering what should be used as evidence and how it should be used:

1. The collection of evidence should not be an onerous task. The appraisee should use wherever possible existing sources of data. For example achievement of objectives related to teaching could be supported by evidence generated from student evaluations or from peer review of teaching (if the individual participates in them).
2. It would not usually be necessary for the appraisee to include copies of the evidence (eg publications) attached to the appraisal form – it is sufficient to refer to them.
3. When setting objectives and thinking about the evidence to demonstrate achievement it is important to think about whether a baseline needs to be established. For example, if an objective is agreed relating to improving teaching quality as measured by student evaluations, a baseline needs to be established at the beginning of the period against which progress can be measured.

(3) Agreeing a Personal Development Plan

In completing Part C, both appraiser and appraisee consider what might prevent the appraisee from achieving their objectives. This could include:

1. Resources
2. Information
3. Management style
4. Organisation
5. Structure
6. Systems/procedures
7. Development

The appraiser should undertake to help the appraisee form an action plan to address those issues which are not related to development. These should be recorded in the relevant section of Part C.

In terms of the appraisee's personal development plan, both appraiser and appraisee should consider the full range of development activities:

1. Courses
2. Conferences
3. Project work
4. Mentoring

5. C.P.D.
6. Rotation of responsibilities
7. Sabbatical
8. External courses
9. Reallocation of teaching duties

which may be used to enhance performance. This should be entered into the relevant section in Part C.

It is essential that both parties understand that any proposed development with resource costs is, at this stage, only a proposal for consideration at University College level.