

## **University of Brighton**

### **Staff Development and Review Scheme Guidance Notes: Academic Staff**

#### **Overview**

The SDR scheme is an important part of the university's staff development policy and framework. It is one of the mechanisms which assist in realising the university's commitment to supporting aspirations, nurturing individual talents, ensuring equality of opportunity and enhancing organisational capability. It aims to achieve a balance between individual development and institutional responsibility for achieving university goals. The Staff Development and Review (SDR) Scheme forms part of the process for assuring and enhancing the quality of academic provision throughout the university and aims to benefit both the university and individual staff members.

These guidance notes should be set in the context of the university's Staffing Strategy, staff development, equality and diversity policies, research, learning and teaching strategies, and the values, challenges and aspirations of the university as set out in the Corporate Plan. The guidance should be read in conjunction with the Staff Development Review (SDR) Scheme Statement, which forms a collective agreement with the recognised trade unions.

#### **Scheme purpose and scope**

The purpose of the SDR Scheme is to:

- enhance work effectiveness and facilitate the personal, professional and career development of staff in the context of faculty, school and university plans;
- identify new and emerging staff development needs and how these can be met; and
- ensure that development activities support the quality of academic provision including teaching, research, economic and social engagement activity and academic administration.

It follows that the scheme provides the opportunity for reviewer and reviewee to:

- review achievements and successes, reflect on the outcome of agreed objectives from the previous SDR and identify any issues or potential barriers arising over the previous review period.
- jointly discuss and review an individual's balance of duties and agree outcomes and objectives in relation to those duties for the coming period.
- discuss and identify the support necessary for the successful performance of those duties and any associated development needs.
- discuss individual short, medium and longer term career aspirations and development needs and aspirations in relation to faculty/school and university plans.

#### **Staff involvement**

As an academic community, it is expected that staff will wish to use the opportunity the SDR provides to review and reflect upon their own achievements and learning over the previous period under review. This should be based on self-challenge and reflection and may draw on a range of sources of feedback including from students, peer review and observation, external examiners, research funders and reviewers, professional bodies, external partners and collaborators etc. Staff should be encouraged to discuss and identify their development needs and career aspirations in pursuit of continuous improvement and academic excellence.

It is anticipated that the SDR process will be the culmination of on-going self-assessment, drawing on evidence gathered throughout the year. This should ensure that the SDR does not focus on immediate issues but on enhancing overall work effectiveness and medium/longer term development needs and career aspirations. Formal SDR meetings are part of the overall management process rather than an annual event, undertaken in isolation. On this basis there should be no fundamental surprises within the content of the annual SDR meeting. Interim reviews may take place as agreed in the SDR meeting. Other meetings, including 1:1 meetings should take place as appropriate as part of ongoing faculty/school management arrangements.

## **Exclusions**

All staff covered by the agreement are expected to participate in the SDR process. It is recognised, however, that there may be cases where the arrangements will need to be varied. For example, in cases where an individual is failing to meet an acceptable level of work and/or is involved in poor performance procedures, or where the individual is involved in some other formal Human Resources procedure (e.g. sickness management, grievance, harassment or disciplinary). In these circumstances the SDR should be postponed until the conclusion of the other formal process.

Likewise, staff in the induction phase should not participate in the SDR process until the induction phase is complete. This phase is covered by separate procedures.

## **SDR Cycle**

The SDR scheme is based on an entitlement to an annual cycle but it is recognised that, exceptionally, it may be beneficial to undertake reviews on a biennial cycle. This might be appropriate where agreed outcomes and objectives have been set over a longer period. The use of a biennial cycle should be discussed between the reviewee and reviewer and agreed with the Head of School. It is also recognised that the SDR process is not the only occasion on which the role or duties may be discussed nor does it replace the regular management of staff activities.

## **Roles and responsibilities of Deans and Heads**

The Dean/Head of School is responsible for:

- the effective operation of the SDR scheme;
- ensuring the fair, equitable and appropriate use of the SDR process for all staff;
- establishing and maintaining arrangements for the overall co-ordination of the SDR process within the faculty/school;
- collecting relevant, generic information from the SDR process to feed into faculty/school/university operational planning (eg staff development with funding implications); and
- personally carrying out a substantial number of SDR meetings as one of the designated reviewers.

Local SDR arrangements should cover:

- who the reviewers are within the school
- the annual SDR meeting timetable
- how the generic outcomes of SDRs will be dealt with and how these relate to plans for developing and enhancing staff development policies and practices.
- how the effectiveness of the SDR process will be evaluated and who has responsibility for taking follow-up action
- who will deal with any disagreements which may arise.

Generally, SDR outcomes should be used to inform budget setting so that development needs can be taken into account in determining future staff development budgets. However, it is recognised that there may be range of opportunities available to support staff development both within schools and faculties and more widely within the university outside the SDR cycle. In planning to meet agreed, identified staff development activity, Heads should take into account the university's staff development and staff studying for qualifications policies and other related schemes e.g research sabbatical scheme.

The Dean/Head of School is responsible for providing advice, guidance and support to reviewers and staff on the SDR process. The Dean/Head should seek further advice and guidance from the Human Resources Department and/or Centre for Learning and Teaching as appropriate.

### **Who the reviewers are and who they review**

The Head of School is expected personally to carry out a substantial number of reviews, usually between 8-15 reviews over each SDR cycle. This may include a range of academic staff across the school.

Other reviews may be undertaken by the Deputy Head or an appropriate senior member of staff of at least Principal Lecturer level specifically designated for this purpose.

The Head of School will determine who will serve as reviewers within the school and which staff they will be responsible for reviewing. For example, in the case of research staff, this may be the appropriate senior Research Leader. The Head of School will take care to ensure that SDR pairings are allocated both efficiently and sensitively, that an on-going constructive relationship is built between reviewers and reviewees over time, and that each reviewer is aware of the range of work done by comparable staff through conduct of multiple reviews. The principle underlying this being that the reviewer will be someone who is both able to relate to the individual, understand the type of work that they do and their subject area.

Academic staff may propose an alternative reviewer who has sufficient familiarity with their work, which should be agreed with the Head of School.

### **Reviewer role and responsibilities**

It is the reviewer's responsibility to ensure that the SDR takes place and is conducted thoughtfully and professionally; using the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the individual member of staff about their achievements and learning during the past year, their balance of duties, professional development needs and career aspirations. The reviewer should ensure the privacy of the meeting.

The reviewer is responsible for ensuring that a formal record of the SDR meeting (see annex 2) and generic SDR outcomes (see annex 3) is created, signed and a copy provided for both parties.

All reviewers will attend approved SDR scheme training. In order to facilitate continuing improvement reviewers should regularly reflect on their performance in this role and seek additional refresher training and/or other support if this is needed. All reviewers should be aware of the university's equality and diversity, staff development and staff studying for qualifications policies and procedures and ensure that they comply with these.

## **Reviewee role and responsibilities**

It is expected that in pursuing their career aspirations, individual members of staff will view this as an annual opportunity to reflect on their work and development, to receive developmental feedback, and to discuss the balance of their own wishes and needs with the priorities for the school or subject.

In preparing for the SDR meeting individuals should reflect on their achievement and development in the context of previously agreed objectives taking account of any relevant feedback. In preparation for the meeting, reviewees should complete a simple form (see annex 1) and send this to the reviewer one week in advance of the meeting. The form asks the reviewee to reflect on their current workload and balance of duties, noting particular successes over the past year; any areas of work which did not go as well as expected and reflections on what has been learnt as a result and any specific staff development activities which have taken place during the year and an evaluation of the impact of these.

The reviewee should come to the meeting prepared to discuss any proposed changes in their duties or preferences for new areas of work, their longer term aspirations and to identify any development or training which they believe would assist in achieving these aspirations.

## **Records and confidentiality**

After the review meeting, both parties should ensure that a summary of the discussion is agreed between the reviewer and the reviewee; and that responsibility is allocated for progressing outcomes and actions identified during the review process. The reviewer is responsible for initiating the necessary paperwork and standard formats will be made available by the Human Resources Department for this purpose.

The SDR discussions are confidential to the individual member of staff and the reviewer. The generic agreed objectives and outcomes should be shared with the Head of School and any proposed staff development bids requiring funding or action should be allocated to the appropriate senior manager(s) with responsibility for planning relevant staff development.

In the event that a new reviewer is appointed the previous SDR records should be available to them. The individual member of staff should be given an opportunity to see the SDR records before they are made available to the new reviewer and to redact any information which they consider to be confidential.

The SDR process is used to inform the university's overall staff development plans and generic anonymised information on training and development needs may be recorded and passed to the Human Resources Department and/or Centre for Learning and Teaching so that it can be used to inform this process.

All data collected and records maintained for the SDR scheme will be used and stored in line with the university's data protection policy.

## **SDR Scheme review**

It is recognised that the Human Resources Department, together with the trades unions, may wish to review the SDR scheme periodically and will agree alterations to the guidelines as necessary. The Human Resources Department will gather information for this purpose, which will include the number of staff identified and trained to carry out SDRs and the numbers of staff participating in the scheme.