

# Notes and guidance

For the use of divisional boards, faculty boards, appraisees and appraisers.

Please read these notes before beginning the appraisal process.

## Objectives of the scheme

The objectives of the appraisal scheme are two-fold. It gives individuals the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing and what they wish to do, and it also gives them the opportunity to comment on what the University (whether in the form of the faculty or department, division, or the central bodies) could realistically do to improve individuals' working lives. Both are equally important. The University believes that any formal opportunity given for reflection, however brief, is valuable when pressures are such that it is difficult to find time for this. It believes too that a means by which academic staff can regularly express views on possible improvements is an essential element in the University's exercise of its responsibility to maintain conditions in which the highest quality teaching and research can take place.

The scheme is **not** linked in any way to discipline, reappointment, promotion or the recognition of distinction.

## Role of the faculty board, divisional board or other appointing body

The faculty board, divisional board, or other appointing body is responsible for appointing an appraiser for each member of academic staff on its establishment. It is possible for an individual member of staff to appeal to that body against the appointment of a particular appraiser or to request the appointment of an additional appraiser.

The faculty board, divisional board or other body is at liberty to adapt the basic appraisal scheme outlined in this document as it sees fit in order to reflect local practice and increase the scheme's usefulness, provided that the scheme's basic principles are respected. It would be possible, for example, for additional information to be requested from appraisees such as a record of activities over the period in question, for further points for reflection to be added, or for more frequent discussions to be encouraged. Details of any adapted version of the scheme must be drawn to the attention of the members of staff in question.

## Arrangements for discussions

A compulsory discussion between the appraisee and the appraiser must be held every five years. Faculty boards, divisional boards and other appointing bodies will notify the appraisee of the year in which the compulsory discussion is to be held. Discussions may be held in the intervening years at the request of either the appraisee or the appraiser; issues may well arise which can be dealt with much more satisfactorily face to face than is possible otherwise.

For individuals in their initial period of office, the first compulsory discussion will be held during the third calendar year after the year of their appointment, and every five years thereafter, assuming reappointment to the retiring age.

For staff holding appointments which do not correspond to the normal cycle of a five-year initial period of office followed by reappointment to the retiring age, a compulsory discussion

will be held at a time to be determined by the relevant faculty board, divisional board or other appointing body, and at five-yearly intervals thereafter should the appointment be held for long enough.

## Process

1. In the year of a compulsory discussion, or in any other year in which the appraisee wishes to hold a discussion, the appraisee should contact the appraiser to arrange a meeting.

2. The appraisee should

(a) reflect on their work objectives and successes and difficulties in meeting them since the last appraisal (over the last five years in the year of a compulsory discussion), their objectives for the coming year (coming five years in the year of a compulsory discussion), and any support, career development or training needs they may have. It may be helpful for the appraiser if appraisees enclose with the form a *brief* summary of their main academic activity during the previous year (last five years in the year of a compulsory discussion);

(b) comment on what the department/faculty, division, or the University as a whole could realistically do to improve their working life. Suggestions and requests should be realistic, e.g. it might be realistic to suggest that a divisional board review the arrangements for teaching a particular option or that a department consider providing more secretarial support; it would almost certainly not be realistic to ask to be relieved of all teaching duties for the next five years.

Forms are [available](#) on the University's website (locally adapted versions may be posted on the relevant faculty or divisional board's website), or from the relevant faculty board secretary or divisional registrar.

3. The appraisee should send the completed form to the appraiser, to arrive before the date of the meeting if one has been arranged, and in any case by **4 December 2020**, or as soon as possible thereafter.

4. The appraiser adds any comments of their own, indicates any issues which need to be drawn to the attention of the department, faculty, or division, signs the form and returns it to the appraisee. The completed form should be passed to the head of department or faculty board chair as appropriate by **15 January 2021**, with the appraisee keeping a copy for their own records.

5. The head of department or faculty board chair should note any general issues raised by the appraisal process, to be addressed at local level or to be passed on to the divisional board or to the officers of the Personnel Committee where appropriate. All documentation relating to the scheme should be kept securely for five years (or longer if local arrangements make this desirable).

## Support for teaching and professional development

As well as colleagues in faculties, departments and colleges, the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the People and Organisational Development team may be able to provide useful resources and support on teaching and professional development. Information may be obtained here: [www.learning.ox.ac.uk/](http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/).

Associate Professors holding college tutorial fellowships (APTFs) may wish to consider the Variation of Duties scheme ([www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/academic/vod/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/academic/vod/)) which allows APTFs to vary the balance of their duties between college and university, enabling them to focus on different aspects of their work at different stages in their career.

### **Confidentiality**

It is emphasised that no-one other than the appraisee and the head of department or faculty board chair (as appropriate) should retain the completed documentation; and heads and chairs are reminded of the need to ensure that the documentation remains secure and confidential. Copies of completed documentation will only be released to appraisees and the appraiser involved in the process in a future year. Where general matters of concern are raised, either at a local level or with the officers of the Personnel Committee, confidentiality should be preserved by individuals not being named.

### **Academic freedom**

Appraisees and appraisers are reminded that appraisal must in no way infringe the academic freedom of the individual member of staff.

### **Review of the scheme**

The appraisal scheme is regularly reviewed by the Personnel Committee in consultation with the relevant academic bodies and with the Oxford Branch of the UCU. Any comments on any aspect of the process should be sent to Mrs R Kinahan ([ruth.kinahan@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.kinahan@admin.ox.ac.uk)).