Setting SMART Objectives

Guidance

Guidance – Setting SMART Objectives

Introduction

Aside from the annual Performance and Development Review (PDR), the University has set out policies to support a high-level of performance throughout the year. The Managing Probation policy outlines how a typical probation period should be managed whilst the Managing and Supporting Performance Policy sets out a process for addressing issues of underperformance for employees who have already completed a probationary period.

Performance related discussions are a core element of each of these processes and as part of these discussions, improvement objectives should be set. It is recommended that the SMART methodology is adopted when doing this.

This guidance note provides additional guidance in relation to setting SMART objectives and may be of use to managers during probation meetings with new members of staff or when implementing a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) under the Managing and Supporting Performance policy.

What are SMART Objectives?

Objectives are defined by a beginning and an end point. They go beyond day-to-day tasks and in essence are a clear statement of something that needs to be accomplished by a specific date.

'SMART' is simply an acronym to guide those involved in setting objectives to ensure that the objectives are:

S	Specific
M	Measurable
A	Achievable
R	Relevant
T	Time-Bound

Each letter in the acronym can be used to prompt further consideration of key issues and some examples of relevant considerations are noted below:

Specific

- What does the employee need to achieve? Are the parameters clear and understandable?
- What is the expected result?

Measurable

- Could the objective be measured with no dubiety over whether or not the objective had been achieved?
- How will those involved know that the objective has been met?
- What indicators might measure progress and/or success?
- Are there any metrics available?
- Can the objective be measured in terms of quantity or quality?

Achievable

- Can it be done (particularly in the timescales involved)?
- Does the employee have the experience, knowledge, skills or ability to achieve the objective?
- What are the training/support needs?
- What support is available (or planned)?
- What resources are available?
- Are there any barriers to achieving the objective?

Relevant

- Why should the objective be achieved? What is its purpose in the context of the employee's role?
- Is the objective appropriate to the employee's role (and grade)?

Time-Bound

- Are there clear time-frames attached to the objective? These align with the monitoring periods outlined in the Managing and Supporting Performance policy, but may be shorter.
- Are there any milestones involved?
- Are there any other influencing factors which might impact on the deadline?

Examples of SMART Objectives

A non-exhaustive list of SMART objective examples are listed below:

- Increase the level of invoices processed each month to X amount
- Deliver the monthly report to [NAME] by the last Friday of each month.
- Deliver training to X number of staff by [DATE]
- Decrease customer waiting times to X
- Deliver all elements of the planned communications campaign by [DATE]