

## PERFORMANCE POLICY

### PURPOSE

UoNSU recognises that having a high-performing staff team is fundamental to our success. How we perform individually and collectively makes a significant difference to the people we work with and to the lives of our students.

This policy explains our approach to managing performance. We intend there to be a consistent approach to performance management across the Union. This approach is intended to facilitate and support people making their best contribution and fulfilling their potential. The policy refers to processes and tools to help us create the conditions in which people can perform at their best. It also outlines the process we will follow where there is a concern about underperformance.

### POLICY

How people perform in their role is very important. The expectations set around what we need to achieve and how we go about it are the foundation for the Union's performance overall. All staff have a contractual responsibility to perform their duties to a good standard, and will be given all reasonable support and encouragement to do so.

Our approach to performance is based on both **what** people do (objectives) and **how** they achieve it (behaviours). Together they describe 'good performance' and provide guidance so everyone behaves in a way which is consistent with our Values.

Our Values are what matter most to us. They summarise the main drivers of our Union and focus us all on our overall vision. They help to create a shared understanding and feeling of connection as a team. They are aligned to the experience we want our students and our staff to have at our Union.

This policy will be reviewed periodically and may be amended from time to time or withdrawn.

## 1. Induction

When you join us at UoNSU, your induction will include performance and learning objectives for your early months, and your probationary period in particular. This is set out in our [Induction Policy](#).

## 2. Setting Objectives

Successful performance is based both **what** you do and **how** it is achieved. Our Performance Review process is designed to build good performance, based on achieving results, demonstrating positive behaviours and applying skills. The process will cover the following steps annually:

- In August :
  - Agreeing SMART objectives based on your role, your department's objectives for the year and any Union-wide shared objectives
  - Agreeing learning and development needs for the year
  - A discussion about each of the values-based behaviours relevant to your role
- From September – June
  - Continuous feedback meetings with your line manager, usually monthly (see section 5)
- June/July
  - Final review and assessment of performance for the year

## 3. 'Good Performance'

Your performance will be measured both in two ways:

- **Outcomes** – results or outcomes on the completion of work
- **Behaviours & Skills** – meeting the relevant values-based behaviours in your Role Profile and applying your skills and learning

To achieve 'good performance' and be eligible for the annual pay award, you must show how you have met criteria in both of these areas.

**Outcomes** could be shown by:

- achievement of agreed objectives on time and to the required level
- delivery of services to a defined level or quality
- programmes or projects that produce measurable results

**Behaviours & skills** could be shown by:

- positive impact on or attitude towards our work, culture and students
- living the values-based behaviours consistently
- learning and application of new knowledge and/or skills
- supporting others to achieve their objectives

#### **4. Values-Based Behaviours**

Our *Living the Values Guide* was drawn from staff input on how the Values could be brought to life in the Union. This has now been developed further as a **Values-Based Behaviours Framework**.

This framework aims to help you to give examples of when you've demonstrated the positive behaviours defined, and to support you in identifying areas for learning and development. The descriptors have been developed for the full range of 'people' applications including recruitment and selection, performance review, personal development, and for shaping our culture. They are designed to be:

- Observable
- Assessable
- Developable

In the new framework, each of our three values has behaviours for different levels of staff, i.e. team member, specialist/supervisor, line manager and senior leader. The behaviours are cumulative - you are expected to demonstrate the ones relevant to your role plus those in the levels below.

We don't intend to define all of the behaviours in this framework. Instead these are core behaviours which describe how you should apply the relevant skills, knowledge and experience in carrying out your work. These behaviours are part of a Continuous Feedback Process. You and your line manager will discuss them regularly, so everyone is clear about where they currently are and where they need to develop.

The Values-Based Behaviours Framework is set out in the table below.

**Values-Based Behaviours Framework**<sup>1</sup>

| <b>EMPOWERING</b>  | <b>As a team member you...</b>  | <b>As a specialist/supervisor you...</b>   | <b>As a line manager you...</b>  | <b>As a senior leader you...</b>  |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Empowering through<br><b>DEVELOPMENT</b>                         | T1 Seek out opportunities to learn more, get feedback and broaden your experience<br><br>T2 Readily share your own know-how and skills with those less experienced                      | S1 Share specialist know-how and broaden others' experience and skills, offering training and guidance<br><br>S2 Help other to explore options in new situations, and so develop their own ideas and approaches  | M1 Allow space for experimentation and risk taking, treating mistakes as learning opportunities<br><br>M2 Identify the level of support and stretch individual's need to develop confidence and capability       | L1 Inspire others to take chances, do more and be more, bringing out the best in people<br><br>L2 Identify future organisational requirements, matching these with individual's aspirations and potential |
| Empowering through<br><b>PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING</b> | T3 Take ownership of problems, using initiative to make decisions that move things forward<br><br>T4 Research facts and interpret policies and principles to resolve problem situations | S3 Give others the information and time they need to resolve problems in their own way, respecting their decisions<br><br>S4 Develop new approaches to problems, taking timely decisions or making recommendations that reflect considered analysis of options | M3 Support people in their decision-making while holding them to account for timely implementation<br><br>M4 Engage others in resolving the more complex, broader problems that occur, building self-sufficiency | L3 Enable decisions to be made at the right level, removing complexity or red tape<br><br>L4 Provide the strategic context as a framework for empowered problem solving                                   |

<sup>1</sup> These behaviours are cumulative: successive levels build on the preceding descriptors. There is a progression from team member through to leader reflecting the greater requirements of the roles and the context in which the role holder operates

| <b>INCLUSIVE</b>  | <b>As a team member you...</b>   | <b>As a specialist/ supervisor you...</b>  | <b>As a line manager you...</b>   | <b>As a senior leader you...</b>   |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Being inclusive through</p> <p><b>CUSTOMER AND STAKEHOLDER SERVICE</b></p> | <p>T5 Make sure the customer knows they're important, finding ways to add value</p> <p>T6 Identify ways to improve the quality or efficiency of your own service</p>   | <p>S5 Build dialogue and mutual understanding with stakeholders/ customers</p> <p>S6 Investigate and implement improvements to the service offered or standards achieved</p>   | <p>M5 Network and engage with the customer/stakeholders to build your understanding of their wider and long term needs</p> <p>M6 Help colleagues to understand the perspective and context of customers/ stakeholders and so enhance the service provided</p> | <p>L5 Make time to explore trends, new ideas and developments to improve stakeholders' experience of the Union</p> <p>L6 Scope new ways of working to improve the relationship/service for stakeholders and partners</p> |
| <p>Being inclusive Through</p> <p><b>TEAM WORK WITH COLLEAGUES</b></p>        | <p>T7 Work flexibly and cooperatively to support colleagues and contacts, actively contributing to a pleasant work environment</p> <p>T8 Build positive working relationships with others, respecting difference</p> | <p>S7 Facilitate and build relationships with others outside the team, engaging others and helping to get things done</p> <p>S8 Create a harmonious working environment, addressing any interpersonal issues promptly and fairly</p> | <p>M7 Draw on the skills, aptitudes, experience and interests of team members, showing people they are valued</p> <p>M8 Make space for different professional working styles, ensuring everyone has a sense of belonging</p>                                  | <p>L7 Act as a role model for team work with internal and external stakeholders at a leadership level</p> <p>L8 Manage group and organisational dynamics to ensure everyone can contribute to their best</p>             |
| <b>COLLABORATIVE</b>  | <b>As a team member you...</b>   | <b>As a specialist/supervisor you...</b>   | <b>As a line manager you...</b>   | <b>As a senior leader you...</b>   |
| <p>Collaborating through</p> <p><b>OPEN COMMUNICATION</b></p>                 | <p>T9 Identify information of relevance to others and ensure they are kept informed</p>  | <p>S9 Tailor communication to the audience, context and agenda to help others fully engage in discussion</p>   | <p>M9 Ask questions, listen, draw out and discuss the broad range of issues, proposals and suggestions, building shared understanding and trust</p>   | <p>L9 Demonstrate and encourage truly open communication and dialogue at all levels</p>  |

|  |   |  |   |   |
|--|---|--|---|---|
|  | T10 Give feedback that is respectful, constructive and open, whilst showing respect for different perspectives  | S10 Provide regular, timely recognition and feedback   | M10 Seek and provide feedback, ensuring open communication up, down and across the organisation and with stakeholders   | L10 Ensure issues are addressed and timely action is taken at an organisational &/or Individual level in response to feedback   |
| Collaborating through<br><b>SHARED GOALS</b> | T11 Organise your time and workload, focusing effort on the priorities and doing what you say you'll do<br><br>T12 Meet agreed standards and deadlines, so enabling others to do their part | S11 Plan and communicate own and/or others' contribution to the overall goals, agreeing clear targets and objectives<br><br>S12 Handle unexpected events, helping others to re-prioritise or adapt plans | M11 Identifies how best to deliver operational requirements and targets using the skills of team members to full effect<br><br>M12 Coordinate a range of people and resources, clarifying conflicting priorities and reallocating resources when circumstances change | L11 Clarify the overall goals and vision for the future, providing direction to enable integrated operational planning<br><br>L12 Manage the balance of skills and resources within and across teams to ensure achievement of strategic goals |

## **5. Continuous Feedback Process**

The Continuous Feedback Process consists of regular discussions with your line manager which support you to achieve your objectives in a way that 'lives our Values'. It also helps you to apply and develop your skills and behaviours to make an immediate difference. Up-to-date feedback will be a central part of these discussions.

The Continuous Feedback Process supports the Union's Learning & Development and Wellbeing Strategies. The discussions are intended to be positive, open and two-way. You will reflect on your work and performance, and your line manager will provide coaching, feedback and direction. Three types of feedback should be provided during these meetings:

- Appreciation
- Coaching
- Appraisal

The frequency of discussions depends on your needs and the nature of the role; for example, how often your activities change and how frequently work needs to be supervised, reviewed or refocused. For most roles this is likely to be monthly, although at times it may be weekly or fortnightly depending on individual needs. The minimum frequency is quarterly. As a guide, the discussion is expected to last up to an hour.

Note that there is an assumption of 'good performance' in this process. The frequency of the meetings and feedback given is designed to identify if someone is falling behind and needs more support.

## **6. Performance and Reward**

To be eligible for the annual pay award, you will need to demonstrate a good level of performance. As explained in section 3, 'good performance' is the demonstration of your contribution in terms of Outcomes and Behaviours & Skills.

If staff are absent for a prolonged period of time (for example, through sickness or on maternity leave), they are still eligible for the annual pay award as long as they are not subject to the Union's formal Performance Improvement Policy.

See the [Pay Policy](#) for further information.

## **7. Performance and Recognition**

Recognition is important so people know they are appreciated and valued, and feel engaged as a result.

Our Recognition Scheme includes the following elements:

- The Leadership & Management Team personally committing to improving and encouraging a culture of personal recognition:
  - **Personal Recognition:** Everyone can recognise and value the contribution of others. Examples include saying thank you, dropping someone an email, letting that person's line manager know how they made a difference or raising it in a team meeting.
- A pilot recognition scheme (non-monetary) is owned and led by members of the staff team to recognise contribution:
  - **Simple Thank you** – Staff can recognise any other member of staff with a card, or small gift, a hot drink etc., up to a maximum value of £5, and reclaim the cost via the Finance Team.
  - **Monthly Awards** - Any member of the Union team can submit a recognition nomination for an individual, group or team. If you would like to do this, you should complete a Monthly Award Nomination Form with details of who you're nominating and why. Recognition awards are reviewed by a Recognition Awards Panel each month.

## 8. Performance Improvement

In situations where an individual's performance is not reaching the Union's 'good performance' level, the line manager will work with them to identify the reasons for the gap in performance with the intention of helping them to improve to the required level. Throughout this, the focus will be to understand the reasons for any underperformance and to provide the support or other interventions needed for performance to reach an acceptable standard as soon as possible. All reasonable efforts will be made to do this.

It is recognised that underperformance may have a number of causes including:

- Lack of aptitude, skill or experience
- Inappropriate recruitment, induction or training
- Lack of resources crucial to performance
- Changes in the nature/allocation of work, e.g. too great a workload
- Personal/family problems
- Reorganisation of structure, role or responsibilities
- Poor attendance or concentration at work related to ill health.

The procedure below is based on exploring the reasons for a gap in performance and addressing them. The process is informal at first, but moves on to outline the formal steps to be taken where poor performance is more serious, frequent or repeated.

### Informal Performance Improvement Process

Where the line manager believes that an individual's performance is not reaching the Union's 'good performance' standard, they should investigate the reasons for this as soon as possible. This will take place at an informal meeting where the manager should discuss the cause for concern.

During the meeting, the line manager should:

- Explain the areas where the individual's performance is below expectations, taking care to describe the basis or the evidence for this. The clear aim of this discussion is to identify any problems or reasons for the underperformance and to resolve them. Solutions could include additional training, reviewing workload, informal guidance, extra resources, providing coaching or some other kind of ongoing support
- Give the individual the opportunity to explain their underperformance and to raise any concerns they may have about the job or the support and guidance they have been given to do it
- Ensure that the member of staff is clear about the level of performance or productivity required in relation to each part of the role where there is a concern
- Set a reasonable timeframe within which improvement is expected and arrange a further meeting at the end of this time to review the situation. When establishing a 'reasonable timescale' for improvement, line managers should consider the complexity of the tasks involved in relation to the qualifications and experience of the individual.

The content and outcome of this meeting should be confirmed by the line manager in writing to the individual. This should be in the form of a Performance Improvement Plan. It should include the type of improvement required, any additional support or training that will be provided, any other agreed actions, and the timescale for improvement and review.

It may be helpful to arrange a number of 1:1 meetings with the individual over an agreed period of time to monitor how things are going with the Performance Improvement Plan, both with the performance issue itself and the effectiveness of the support/actions offered.

It is important to clarify that the individual's performance should start to improve immediately after the issue has been drawn to their attention, and any relevant support or adjustment has been made.

### Notes for Line Managers

When discussing underperformance, managers must be specific about their concerns and must be able to show evidence and/or give examples.

Managers are required to bear the following in mind:

- The provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, and in particular the obligation to make reasonable adjustments when dealing with disabled people or those with particular circumstances.
- It may be that underperformance is related to illness, in which case it's important to refer to the Sickness Absence Policy for guidance.
- The range of family friendly, flexible working, leave and wellbeing options which are available to staff, if this has relevance to the underperformance issue. These are explained in the relevant policies.
- In situations where the individual is incapable of performing to an acceptable standard, or they feel they are 'out of their depth' or unsuited to the role, redeployment may be considered as an option.
- HR can provide further guidance and support on all of these areas.

It may be that this informal stage will bring about the changes required and no further action may be necessary.

### **Formal Performance Improvement Process**

Where informal action hasn't resulted in the required improvement, it may be appropriate to move to a formal process which results in formal performance warnings being issued or, potentially, to dismissal.

A member of staff who is subject to a formal Performance Improvement Process has the right to be accompanied during any formal meetings. This could be by a work colleague or a Trade Union representative.

#### Stage 1

If performance does not meet acceptable standards and informal action has not succeeded in addressing the problem, or the underperformance or capability is serious enough to justify formal rather than informal action in the first place, the line manager will invite the individual to discuss the issues formally.

At this first formal meeting, the individual should be reminded of any discussions that have previously taken place and the actions agreed on the Performance Improvement Plan. The exact nature of the underperformance issue should be explained clearly. There should also be an attempt to understand why previous actions have not helped.

Consideration will be given to any further training or support needed to address the issue – the focus of the conversation remains to address the causes and to bring about an improvement. Any actions agreed should be recorded. The staff member should also be informed about the date of review and what will happen if there is no improvement.

A written performance warning may be issued from this meeting. The warning will remain on file for 6 months, but will be disregarded if performance reaches an acceptable standard in that time.

The staff member will not be eligible for the annual pay award unless and until performance has improved and has been sustained for a period of 3 months. This will be from the date of the letter confirming the Performance Improvement Plan agreed following the Stage 1 meeting. The pay award will not be back dated.

#### Stage 2

If performance continues to be unsatisfactory, or in more serious cases of capability or underperformance, the manager will invite the staff member to another formal meeting (this will be the first or second formal meeting depending on the seriousness of the issue). The timescale for improvement should be clearly set out at this meeting and what will happen if there is no acceptable improvement. Further consideration should be given to any training or support and some exploration of how the individual feels this could help when earlier interventions have failed.

A final written performance warning may be issued. This will remain on file for 12 months, but disregarded if performance reaches an acceptable standard during that time.

The staff member will not be eligible for the annual pay award unless and until performance has improved and has been sustained for a period of 3 months.

### Stage 3

If performance continues to be unsatisfactory despite all reasonable help and support being given, the staff member may be dismissed on the grounds of capability or underperformance.

### **Appeal**

Staff have a right to appeal the outcome of any formal performance warnings. The appeal should be made in writing within 7 days (i.e. 7 UoNSU non-closure days, including weekend days). The appeal will be heard by a more senior manager. Staff have a right to be accompanied at any appeal meetings.

The outcome of the appeal meeting will be given in writing within 7 days. There is no further right of appeal after this.

Both the informal and formal performance improvement process are non-contractual and UoNSU reserve the right to depart from the process in appropriate cases, including for example where an individual is within a probationary or trial period.

**END**