

Having a Development Conversation

Additional Learning Resource - Guide for Reviewers and Reviewees

Introduction

Development Conversations can take place at any time and may be with your line manager, Personal Development Review (PDR) Reviewer or a Mentor. Regardless of who you have the conversation with initially, your discussion should become part of the ongoing PDR conversation with your Reviewer and may form the basis of your Developmental Goals in PDR.

Each employee should take responsibility for their own development while seeking out the available support within Queen's or elsewhere. Development Conversations are a good place to start.

It is important that these conversations are undertaken as a meaningful, positive opportunity for Reviewers and Reviewees and are not seen as 'one-off' or 'tick-box' exercises. This is the time to make sure that you have a plan in place to make progress towards development goals that are clearly identified.

Investing time in good quality conversations about learning and career development can help improve contribution, build engagement and commitment from employees.

The aim is for people to feel motivated and achieve in their current roles and develop further to reach their full potential.

This guide does not cover the policy for PDR or Academic Progression, but aims to provide support on steps that can be considered when preparing for, or taking part in, development conversations.

For guidance on PDR, Academic Progression, FAQs and additional resources, including Skills Workshops for PDR Reviewers and Reviewees visit: go.qub.ac.uk/PDRinfo.

Development Conversations – A Useful Structure

The following points are designed to provide some guidance for the participants in a development conversation: the individual/Reviewee and another colleague such as a manager, Reviewer or mentor.

1. What is the Context?

Development conversations are relevant for all staff, and can take place in a variety of situations:

- Individuals/Reviewees who are demonstrating effective contribution, are reliable and consistent: explore how to maintain and build their contribution, potentially take on additional responsibility or consider career plans.
- Individuals/Reviewees who are developing and need time in their role to demonstrate further contribution; those who are new to a role or in a transition period: explore how to support them to reach their potential in the current role and then to think ahead.
- Individuals/Reviewees who clearly make a consistent contribution which exceeds priorities within their role: explore how to invest, develop and build potential for future opportunities.
- Individuals/Reviewees who are not meeting expectations: explore how to explore together what barriers exist that may have been a factor in the Reviewee not fulfilling their priorities. Agree immediate development and support rather than future options, new tasks or responsibilities.

2. Prepare

Individual/Reviewee
Reflect honestly on where you are in your career stage or your role
Consider if, and how, you want to progress and what would be needed to achieve this progression
Reflect on your contributions to date, particularly highlighting capabilities, achievements, strengths and areas of challenge
Think about realistic and appropriate learning and development options, actions you could take or commitments you might make to help improve your effectiveness in your current role or preparing for career progression
Consider realistic and appropriate career development plans

Reviewer/Manager/Mentor
Depending on the nature of the working relationship (Reviewer/Manager/Mentor) reflect on the Reviewee's role and contribution
What kind of development conversation is this likely to be? (Consider the context and range of situations listed above and prepare accordingly).
Prepare some key questions and feedback if necessary
Be ready to adopt a coaching and facilitative approach
What kind of development might be appropriate for this person, and is realistic or appropriate?
Be prepared to explain where development opportunities may not be possible or require additional consideration or authorisation

- Think ahead and make notes to prepare for the conversation so that each person is ready to discuss the main issues around development and related aspects that need to be covered.
- Ensure the arrangements are conducive for an effective conversation.
- Both participants need to be ready for an open, two-way conversation which builds towards continuing positive working relationships as well as agreeing outcomes.

3. Establish the Conversation

- Allow some time to build rapport
- Ensure potential timing and interruption issues are minimised
- Agree to focus on having a positive, professional, open and encouraging conversation.

4. Explore

- Build mutual understanding and insight. Areas which may be covered could include:
 - Strengths, areas of challenge, development needs, motivations, career aspirations
 - Achievements and progress towards agreed objectives
 - Feedback, thoughts and views from both perspectives.
- Assess whether any additional information is required in order to assist the conversation.
- Summarise at this stage to acknowledge what has been highlighted.

5. Identify Options

- Discuss possibilities for addressing the areas explored and achieving the goals or outcomes which were established.

Approaches to Learning and Career Development

Consider learning for yourself and others via:

Experience – learning gained on-the-job; by completing daily tasks and solving problems. This could include: workplace projects, additional duties and responsibilities

Exposure – learning with and through others. This could include: coaching, mentoring, social learning building networks and collaboration.

Formal learning – learning through structured opportunities. This could include courses, workshops and programmes including education (formal study), seminars and online learning.

Developing a career does not always mean ‘climbing the ladder’, increased responsibility and internal or external promotion. With more diverse, changing and technologically enhanced workplaces, development throughout a career can include:

- Growing in your role by learning new systems, exposure to new ways of working
- Gaining exposure to new teams or work groups
- Gaining new knowledge and skills within your own area of expertise
- Sharing knowledge – seeking a mentor, or training or mentoring others
- Moving sideways or laterally across a function, department or organisation

6. Clarify Expectations

- Consider in the context of the team/work area
- Focus on the employee taking responsibility for their own development.
- What support can be provided?
- What are the priorities and next steps?

7. Agree the Plan of Action

- Agree specific actions or steps require, with dates where possible.
- How will both parties know that these are on target or have been completed successfully?
- Agree what needs to be summarised and documented from this conversation.
- Close the conversation and agree how and when this will be followed up.

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