

Managers' Toolkit: One to one meetings

You can navigate this document in 2 ways.

Either you can scroll through it as normal, or you can use the tabs at the top of each page to navigate to the sections that interest you (as in the screenshot to the right).

Some pages will have links to resources on the Queen Mary website or intranet (Connected).



There are 3 icons in the lower right of each page:



Return to the first page of this document.



Return to this page.



Visit the Staff Support Hub on Connected.

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One to ones cover a variety of topics. The tabs above give you possible areas of focus. These mirror the sections in appraisal – making the appraisal summary easier.

It can be easy to fall into a trap of speaking about the same things at each one to one. Instead, try to ensure each meeting covers work and a person-focussed area. It might be helpful to arrange separate meetings on development and career discussions.

Make sure your team members know what to expect. Provide them with an agenda or focus of the meeting so they can reflect and prepare; this may be more important for some team members than others.

Opening

You may want to ask general questions, so the team member can raise what they want:

- How are you?
- What would you like to cover?

Try to ask some more specific questions in order to delve deeper and provide some focus.

How often and how long?

Choose a regular time that suits you both, and a place that provides confidentiality and informality. Try not to change the meeting; this shows it is important to you.

One to ones are normally weekly or fortnightly. This will depend on a number of factors:

- How experienced the member of staff is – you may have more frequent one to ones when someone starts, and less often (but still regular) when they are more experienced.
- What you use the time for – for example, do you use it to do work together on a project?
- How many staff you have?
- Your team members' preference - everyone works best in different ways, so ask your team members what would work for them in terms of timing and frequency. This demonstrates an inclusive and collegial approach.

You may choose to have meetings of different lengths: for example, a 15-minute catch up every week, a one-hour meeting every fortnight, and perhaps a longer session to focus on development every other month.

Consider walking meetings – these support your wellbeing, and can lead to different kinds of conversations than those you might have in a more traditional setting such as a meeting room.

It is important that people are clear about what is expected of them and how their objectives link to [Strategy 2030](#) and School/Departmental plans. You can also cover how their objectives can support their development, their career goals, and/or what is important to them.

Possible questions/areas

- Review actions from last one to one: If they're not complete, what prevented the actions from happening? What happened last week?
- When we last spoke you said that X was a struggle for you; how is it going now? What's proving difficult? How might we address this?
- What are your plans and priorities for this week?

Encourage reflection and provide feedback

- What do you feel proud of?
- What went well/not so well on the project? Why? What is the one thing you have learnt this week?
- What areas of your work do you want to improve?
- Are you getting enough feedback? How do you prefer to receive feedback?

Provide feedback at every one to one:

- Every piece of feedback should be specific – not just thanks that went well.
- Address any performance issues early on
- A ratio of 6:1 positive to constructive is suggested to be best to motivate

You can use the [appraisal form](#) to update objectives regularly, or you can keep track of objectives separately – see [here](#) for an example.

Why set objectives

- They enable a shared understanding of what success will look like.
- They ensure work is prioritised based on areas that are aligned to Strategy 2030, Enabling Plans, Department plans and (where possible) the individual's interests and ambitions.
- They help people see the link between their work and wider team/University objectives.

How

- Normally objectives are expressed as outcomes, rather than detailed descriptions of how work is to be done – this encourages ownership and accountability.
- Some objectives will change in the face of shifting circumstances and opportunities.
- Some objectives will depend on the availability of support/resources.
- They should relate to all the main areas of a person's role, including:
 - Continuing or 'business as usual' work – here the standards expected would be included
 - one-off projects – focussing on the outcome of the project

Review all objectives to check they are SMART

Specific	The outcome is focussed, tangible and concrete.
Measurable	Describe the features of a successful outcome. Some may be quantifiable. Where it is not possible to quantify: has the outcome been described sufficiently clearly that both sides know what success would look like?
Achievable	Objectives should be achievable in normal working time and within the control of the individual, in the anticipated context, including the resources likely to be available.
Relevant	Objectives must be relevant to the activities and ambitions of the individual and the Department/School/Institute priorities, and aligned to Strategy 2030
Timely	Objectives have a deadline which should be appropriate to the nature of the work, rather than be driven by the annual review cycle. Where longer timescales than a year are appropriate and agreed, it is helpful to discuss interim milestones.

Citizenship is about:

- contributing to our Queen Mary community;
- how you demonstrate **Our Values in action** when delivering your objectives.

It is worth prompting people to consider where they might contribute to the wider Queen Mary community. Would you like to volunteer on Clearing or on graduation ceremonies, start or join a **community of practice**, or become a **mentor**?

For other examples, see our **Citizenship** page.

Our Values in action can help you set expectations about behaviours and help provide feedback.

Take time to identify and discuss where you have seen them put the Values into action, and where there might be opportunities in upcoming tasks or projects.

Introduction

Tasks/Objectives

Citizenship including
Values in action

**Support and
Engagement**

Career and
development

Closing, taking
notes and follow up

Wellbeing can be impacted by factors inside and outside of the workplace. Be sensitive, as often wellbeing challenges are difficult to share.

Check in on how they are

- How are they feeling generally, with work and at home?
- Consider checking in on their family or a recent event in their life. Individuals will want to share different things about their lives, so ask questions about things that they have already shared with you.

Consider how they are working with the team

- How are things going with their colleagues or the team they are working with? Do they have any recommendations for how we can improve the way we collaborate/communicate?
- Do they feel comfortable giving members of the team feedback?

Consider engagement and retention

- What has kept them enthusiastic in their current project/role?
- How can we do more of what motivates them?
- How can you, as a manager, better support them?
- How can the team help them to feel more motivated and empowered in their current job position?

Introduction

Tasks/Objectives

Citizenship including
Values in action

**Support and
Engagement**

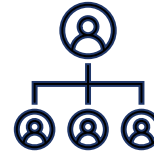
Career and
development

Closing, taking
notes and follow up



Support for staff

- [Employee Assistance Programme](#)
- [Wellbeing resources](#)
- [Mental Health First Aiders](#)
- [Staff Disability Network](#)



Support for managers

- Toolkits to support managers and supervisors: [Manager's Essentials](#)
- [Healthy & Safety Executive Talking toolkit](#)
- [Employee Relations Team](#) and Occupational Health

Lack of career growth is often why people leave jobs; part of your role is to support people in their development.

Questions you might ask:

- What are the skills that you are interested in picking up from the job?
- Is there someone within or outside the organisation that you would like to learn from?
- How can I better support you to achieve your personal or professional goals?

You will find a toolkit on career development in our [Professional Services Career Development](#) pages.

Keep your eye on the time, wrap up points, and make sure that the discussion moves on. However, it is also important to be flexible, and to give people time to air their issues properly.

- Summarise actions – both yours and theirs.
- Check - Is there anything that was missed out, or not fully addressed?

Taking notes

It can be helpful to take notes in one to ones for a number of reasons; for example, they:

- Support a shared understanding of what has been agreed, and can be followed up at the following one to one.
- Help you both to identify consistent themes, e.g. about process or skills issues
- Create a record of progress for motivation (see what you have achieved), appraisal, possible bonus applications, and to identify and evidence any performance issues

You can do this in a number of ways: on a shared OneNote, or in the Meeting Notes of your Teams meeting (helpful if you have set up a recurring meeting). If you want to capture a number of documents, you can use the [chat in Teams](#). A [number of tools](#) are available.

Follow up

Ensure you follow up what you said you would do; this will build trust and motivation.

Tips

Trouble Shooting

Coaching approach

Introducing one to ones for the first time: be clear about the aim, and how you want people to prepare. Also ask people what they want to cover.

Before the meeting, prepare e.g – reflect on past work, new work, and how the individual could get involved with other members of the team or teams

Devote your full attention. Turn Teams to “Do Not Disturb” and close down Outlook.

Cultivate a psychologically safe environment so people feel able to share their issues. You can be the first to say something personal to show them that the meeting is safe. What and how you share will depend on the person. Work on finding the right balance between being open and being professional.

Begin and end every meeting on a positive note. Whether it is a difficult conversation or constructive feedback, try to conclude the meeting on a positive note. For example, perhaps the plan to address ongoing issues is positive, or it’s good that the underlying issues has been raised and discussed.

Tips

Trouble Shooting

Coaching approach

I notice that my team member...**Suggestions**

Uses one-to-ones to complain (e.g. about colleagues, the state of the office, the state of the world...)

Allow the team member to express the problem, and ask questions to ensure you understand. Then move on to questions to solve the problem. Sometimes the team member just needs to offload have their feelings acknowledged. That is a valuable function of one to ones. However, if they are often complaining with no desire to take action, you can reflect it back to them. "You often come to this meeting with..."

Doesn't take responsibility for their own work (or lack thereof)

It is worth reflecting on whether you have:

- Set clear expectations and clarified who is accountable for what (putting it in writing can help)
- Followed up to see how the work is progressing (consistently)
- Discussed with the person whether they have the resources (time, skills etc) needed for the work
- Helped them address blocks

Sometimes people don't feel responsible if:

- They are told how to do a task (rather than just given an outcome and freedom to decide how to meet it), as they don't then have the autonomy to make it work
- They aren't involved in discussions that impact on the task they have been given
- They feel they won't get supported if things go wrong

Tips

Trouble Shooting

Coaching approach

I notice that my team member...

Suggestions

Comes with problems, not with solutions.

Take a coaching approach, and support your team member to come up with their own solution. More tips [here](#).

However, be wary of insisting people only come with solutions – the risk is you will not hear about some problems.

We all have a bias towards action. Taking time to explore a problem and gain different perspectives can help us develop more impactful solutions.

Reacts badly to constructive feedback, or seems oversensitive to it

Remain calm, give them time to reflect, and encourage them to come back with a move towards taking action.

Your notice performance is slipping – a deadline missed or behaviour is not aligned to our Values.

Catch it early and discuss any problems. Try and identify what the issues are – is it a lack of skill, or a lack of understanding of expectations?

The Enabling Performance workshop might help you have these conversations.

Tips

Trouble Shooting

Coaching approach

Using a coaching approach will be more effective overall, as you are supporting the team member to solve their problem.

Listen. Stop if you find yourself talking more than you listen. Wait for your team member to break the silence instead of trying to fill the dead air.

Listen actively. Practice asking open-ended questions (try to avoid "Why...?") that encourage full, rich answers. Ask follow-up questions to help them explore the issue.

Suspend your own agenda. There may be something that they need to explore that takes priority. This discussion is about them!

Challenge your assumptions. Try not to let your previous experiences with this individual affect your expectations of an outcome.

Avoid giving solutions. Empower them to offer solutions and consider approaches.

To develop your skills on taking a coaching approach, you can attend our Coaching as a Manager workshop.

Introduction

A framework

Giving feedback: Make sure you are in the right intent – it should be to improve the situation or person’s performance. Don’t get give feedback if you feel angry or resentful.

Ask for feedback: You may not receive any feedback initially, but do not stop asking for it. Once you establish enough trust, your team member will start sharing feedback with you.

Receiving feedback: Ensure you respond positively by thanking them – it does not mean you always have to accept the feedback, but you need to respond positively and ask questions to ensure you understand it.

To develop your feedback skills, this [LinkedIn Learning module](#) might help.

**Clarify/
Context**

Thanks for letting me know this is a good time to talk. I wanted to raise the issue of our shared inbox – we tell people we’ll respond in 3 business days.

Explain

I’ve noticed that some emails are still unread in the inbox five or six days later. Some colleagues from other teams are not getting the information they need and it is slowing down projects; we’re getting complaints.

Discuss

What is going on? Are there more emails, or more complex queries coming in?

Agree

We’re going to ask another member of the team to help respond to queries.

Review

Let us look at this again next month and find out if anything needs to change.

Inclusive

Proud

Ambitious

Collegial

Ethical



Inclusive

Maintaining our tradition of nurturing and supporting talented students and staff regardless of their background.

Maintaining our tradition of nurturing and supporting talented students and staff, regardless of their background

For all of us, this means:

- Welcoming people, their voices and experience from our entire University and beyond, to add depth, insight, value and diversity of thought to everything we do
- Striving for equity and fairness, and maintaining dignity and respect for all our communities
- Actively considering the range of needs in our community
- Nurturing and celebrating our networks of students, colleagues, and community
- Respecting people's different skills and knowledge, acknowledging their contribution and their demands as well as their successes

Inclusive

Proud

Ambitious

Collegial

Ethical

Proud of the difference we make when we work collectively.

For all of us, this means:

- Highlighting our own and others' successes
- Ensuring we are informed about the University's achievements, and celebrating them widely, recognising that we are stronger together than individually
- Recognising our strengths, communicating and building on them
- Providing appropriate, healthy challenge and support to others
- Holding ourselves individually and collectively accountable for our commitments



Proud

Proud of the difference
we make when we
work collectively.

Inclusive

Proud

Ambitious

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Ethical

Foster innovation, disrupt convention, respond with imagination to new opportunities.

For all of us, this means:

- Aiming for excellence in everything we do
- Seeking out the best available evidence to inform sustainable, timely, robust decisions
- Seeking opportunities for continuous improvement, being ready to challenge the status quo
- Having the confidence to experiment with new and creative approaches
- Understanding that we will sometimes fail, but having the confidence to acknowledge and learn from our mistakes and to support others to do likewise
- Focusing on outcomes rather than processes
- Being clear about our priorities, to sustain successful delivery



Ambitious

Foster innovation, disrupt convention, respond with imagination to new opportunities.

Inclusive

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Strong community built on openness, listening, understanding, co-operation and co-creation.

For all of us, this means:

- Working collaboratively, building strong partnerships across Queen Mary and beyond, to resolve major challenges
- Seeking to understand academic and professional services challenges so that we can build healthy, productive working relationships
- Being prepared to, and feeling comfortable to, share ideas as well as offering constructive challenge when appropriate
- Listening to and acting on constructive and supportive feedback
- Working with others to resolve issues respectfully, and committing to the decisions and outcomes
- Actively supporting and endorsing each others' work and being committed to each others' success



Collegial

Strong community built on openness, listening, understanding, co-operation and co-creation.

Inclusive

Proud

Ambitious

Collegial

Ethical



Ethical

Always acting with the highest ethical standards and integrity.

Always acting with the highest ethical standards and integrity.

For all of us, this means:

- Demonstrating Queen Mary Values through both our work and our behaviours
- Acting with integrity at all times
- Seeking out, implementing and championing good practice
- Understanding our own capacity and capability to deliver
- Accepting personal responsibility for resolving issues
- Understanding our impact on others, including our partners and stakeholders
- Building a supportive network to identify when we, or others, need help

Further information and resources to support you as a manager

Human Resources: Including information on recruitment, appraisal, and policies & procedures

Organisational & Professional Development: Including the OPD training catalogue, mandatory training, and coaching/mentoring. OPD also offers:

- **Pathways to Leadership:** Queen Mary's leadership development programme for staff at all points in their journey – from those not yet in management roles, to school and departmental leaders - including a workshop on Enabling Performance.
- **Professional Services Career Development:** A suite of tools, resources and case studies to support Professional Services staff in their careers at Queen Mary.
- **Qualification Programmes:** Opportunities to earn professional qualifications while remaining in work, for both new and current colleagues.