

Quick Guide

Managing performance: why, what, how?

Why it matters...

Raising performance issues can be daunting but where you are in a position to support someone reach their potential, it is important to do it.

Struggling to perform and meet deadlines can be a significant cause and sign of stress – we cannot help people if we don't address this.

For the University to meet its objectives, everyone needs to be performing to the best of their ability

There can be an impact on the wider team and on morale where issues are not addressed

What do I need to do?

Whenever someone is struggling to meet the requirements of their role, it is important to step in and offer support. Do this as soon as you see an issue rather than trying to give them more time to recover on their own.

Having a chance to discuss the issues, and to apply a structured approach (outside of the formal procedure) with timescales and reviews, can make the difference in getting someone back on track. If this is not successful, there will be a need to move to the formal procedure (with HR support).

Approach the conversation as giving someone the chance to open up rather than telling someone they are not meeting the standard.

How it works



- Action should always begin informally.
- Clarity is key – set out the requirements, give examples of the problem, explain what needs to happen and by when. Use a [PIP](#) or similar record.
- Consider what support and development is needed.

- Arrange regular reviews to discuss progress.
- Always make and share written records – it is difficult to take in everything at a meeting.
- Encourage the individual to contact you for any guidance – or for them to have a mentor and/or coaching.

- Objective is to resolve the issue and not to dismiss.
- The formal procedure is necessary where informal action has not brought the improvement needed and it may help to focus minds
- There are three stages – first formal warning, final written warning, dismissal.
- Always get advice from HR – they will support at every stage, informal and formal.

How will I know I have got it right?

Tackling performance issues is not always easy, but it should lead to:

- Restored confidence and a renewed sense of self worth.
- A reduction in stress and anxiety.
- Performance at the level that the individual is capable of.
- And it will contribute to a stronger University performance.

How might someone react?

Denial: they may not want to admit they are struggling or having problems. This is where it is important to stick to the evidence and invite them to come forward with their own. It may be useful to give them time to reflect and meet again soon after.

Anger/upset: discussing these issues can generate a lot of emotion – it is important to recognise that this is not unusual while also responding calmly and focusing on addressing the issues.

Challenge to the requirements: While it is reasonable to be open to considering deadlines and workload, it is also important to maintain the standards that are expected of that role and to be clear where deadlines are not negotiable. You should set out the requirements in writing after the meeting.

Where there has been a difficult meeting, you should follow up important points in writing afterwards – this is important as there may have been some misunderstanding in discussion. Always offer to meet again when they have had a chance to reflect and calm down.

Tips for discussing capability

- Make sure you are clear about the requirements and have examples of where there are problems.
- Be ready for the individual to respond emotionally – this is a natural part of coming to terms with the fact that there is an issue. Don't respond defensively or let this put you off.
- Explore whether there are any factors affecting the individual's performance e.g. health issues, worries outside of work, through open questions.
- When the discussion ends, have a clear plan for next steps and the next meeting.
- **Remember:** the outcome will ultimately be positive even if it does not feel like that initially.

“The capability procedure should be used at an early stage to help improve performance”

Contact your Senior Employee Relations Adviser/Employee Relations Adviser.
For more Quick Guides go to '[People Strategy in Action](#)'

[Capability procedure](#) and guidance