



# University of Limerick

## POLICY FOR PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW SYSTEM

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This policy sets out the principles for implementation of the Performance and Development Review (PDR) System at the University of Limerick (UL). UL aims to empower staff to deliver their best, fulfil their potential, and contribute positively to the organisation's ambitious future. The PDR system is a key tool for fostering transformative and supportive conversations between individuals and their managers, thereby ensuring ongoing employee engagement and supporting the delivery of the University's strategic priorities.

PDRs play a key role in this by:

- Ensuring alignment of team and individual objectives with the University's strategic priorities and values.
- Reviewing performance to date and agreeing future performance objectives, which in turn will support fulfilment of the University's ambitions. Supporting the professional development of staff across the University, while encouraging responsibility for career development.
- Providing all staff with the valuable opportunity to reflect on their performance, potential and development needs.

Overall, the aim of the PDR system is to foster ambition, improve the organisation's effectiveness and support professional/ career development.

## 1.2 Scope

### 1.2.1 *To whom does the policy apply?*

The Performance and Development Review System applies to all employees of UL subject to the following exemptions:

- During the probation period, PDR meetings will not apply as priority is given to Probation meetings. PDR meetings then apply on completion of probation.
- Normal exemptions will apply, e.g., those on maternity leave, long-term sick leave, sabbatical leave, etc.
- Those within one year of retirement may also be deemed exempt as a Reviewee. Where relevant, however, Reviewer obligations remain.

### 1.2.2 *In what situations does the policy apply?*

The Performance and Development Review System is UL's framework for facilitating every employee of the University to contribute fully to UL's mission, vision, strategy and quality management system and to achieve their full potential.

This Policy operates alongside other University policies and procedures as outlined in Section 5 below.

### **1.2.3 Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedure) is implemented and monitored?**

The implementation of this policy will be the responsibility of the direct line manager, with Deans/Heads of Department/Heads of Divisions playing a key role.

Policy review and adherence will rest with the Director of HR.

HR Talent Development will be responsible for the operation of the procedures associated with the Policy.

## **1.3 Definitions**

### **1.3.1 Performance and Development Review**

A key objective of Performance and Development Review is to enhance performance and development for all staff across the University. The Performance and Development Review system may be defined as a joint process, which enables a staff member and the person(s) to whom one reports to together:

- Review performance and achievements against objectives for the previous year.
- Agree and set relevant role objectives for the staff member, using SMART criteria. These objectives should be clearly linked to the goals of the department/area and the University i.e., strategic plan / strategic priorities, KPIs, values, Quality Improvement Plan/ Quality Management System and individual objectives. Due consideration should be given to what is feasible in line with timescales and resources.
- Discuss and summarise aspirations, plans and professional development needs for forthcoming year and beyond (up to 5 years where applicable). Managers should foster a supportive environment where staff are encouraged to be proactive in developing their own career.
- Agree any associated support, which is needed to help attain the agreed objectives within the boundaries of available resources.

### **1.3.2 Reviewer**

The Reviewer of an individual is normally their direct Line Manager.

A Reviewer supports their Reviewees in the achievement of goals and objectives as aligned with their roles and the needs of the Organisational Unit and University. The Reviewer also provides meaningful feedback and encourages Reviewees to realise their potential and to explore their career options.

The Reviewer may, on occasion, be nominated by the direct Line Manager. This can apply to manage span of control and should be managed in line with the Guidelines for Alternate PDR Reviewers.

In cases where there is a formal dispute/industrial relations matter and with agreement with the HR Division the manager's manager or another University representative may attend the PDR meeting also. In this instance, the employee has the right to be accompanied by their trade union representative or a colleague. In exceptional cases, they may conduct the PDR meeting instead of the manager, following agreement with the HR Division.

### **1.3.3 Organisational Unit**

Any Faculty, Department, School, Institute, Division Administrative Unit etc. of the University of which the Reviewee is a member.

### **1.3.4 Objectives**

A description of the contributions agreed between Reviewer and Reviewee, aligned with the University Strategy and the relevant Organisational Unit plans which the Reviewee plans to deliver during the coming year/years.

### **1.3.5 Core Values**

UL's Core Values are the principles that guide the University's actions.

### **1.3.6 Development Plan**

A set of development activities focused on skills, competencies or behaviours that support performance in the current role, as well as consideration for future career planning. These are agreed between the Reviewer and Reviewee following a developmental conversation.

## **2 Context**

### **2.1 Legal and Regulatory Context**

#### **2.1.1 Universities Act 1997**

The objects and functions of the Universities Act, 1997 emphasise the obligation of continual improvement and the requirement to educate, train and retrain higher level professional, technical and managerial personnel.

#### **2.1.2 Quality and Qualifications Act 2012 (amended 2019)**

This policy supports the implementation of the University's obligations in respect of the Quality and Qualifications Act (2012) as amended.

### **2.2 Other Context**

#### **2.2.1 University of Limerick Strategic Plan**

This policy is set out in the context of the University's Strategic Plan.

#### **2.2.2 Staff Talent Development Policy**

UL's Staff Development Policy highlights the importance of identifying staff training needs from the feedback collected from PDRs.

## 3 Policy Statements

### 3.1 Principles for PDRS

#### 3.1.1 *UL's Commitment*

The PDR System is underpinned by UL's commitment to ensure all staff should have the opportunity to have a performance and development conversation with their Reviewer. This is protected time, focusing on the individual's performance and development, and is a key mechanism for supporting colleagues in their role. It is the manager's responsibility to ensure that each individual has an annual PDR meeting.

#### 3.1.2 *Human Rights, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

The principles of human rights, equality, diversity and inclusion should underpin the content, process, and outcomes of all PDR meetings.

#### 3.1.3 *Confidentiality*

Forms will be held on the relevant IT system. These can be viewed by the individual and their manager and Head of Division/Dept/Dean at any stage. If a new manager is appointed, this individual will be able to view forms pertaining to their team member.

Forms will also be viewable by the HR Talent Development team. This is with a view to reporting on PDR completion rates, and gathering data relating to training needs to inform the organisational training plan.

#### 3.1.4 *Expectations of Reviewees*

Reviewees should:

- Know what is expected of them in their role, their goals, and how they carry out their work in line with the expectations of the role and UL's competencies and values.
- Understand how their role contributes to the success of their Organisational Unit and the University as a whole.
- Effectively prepare for the annual PDR meeting, drawing on relevant strategic documents, University values, role profiles, competency frameworks or other relevant documents. Reflect on their contribution and any challenges they are experiencing.
- Receive feedback on their contribution in a supportive and constructive manner.
- Discuss and identify opportunities for development in their current role and for their future career aspirations.

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- Be responsible for their own career development.
- Aspire to contribute to an inclusive workplace culture where diversity and equality are valued, and all those we interact with are treated with dignity and respect.
- Actively participate in the process and complete PDR forms within the timescales. Recognise that PDRs are a key activity for facilitating every employee of UL to contribute fully to the University's mission and vision to achieve their full potential. It is informed by and supports the University's strategic plan.
- Attend training sessions on PDRs before starting the PDRs process.
- Follow up on any agreed development opportunities.

### **3.1.5 Expectations of Reviewers**

The Reviewer should:

- Complete PDR for Managers Training before starting the PDR process.
- Provide context and clarity to the Reviewee for how their role and contribution links to the strategy and goals of the Organisational Unit and to ensure that the outcomes of the process are positive for the performance of both the Reviewee and UL.
- Effectively prepare for the annual PDR meeting, reviewing draft forms from reviewees.
- Recognise the transformative nature of meaningful PDR meetings. Enquire, listen and provide honest and constructive feedback, covering the full spectrum of performance, together with guidance and support for enhancing performance.
- Agree clear and appropriate objectives for the coming year(s) with the Reviewee.
- Discuss how these will contribute to equality, diversity and inclusion, where appropriate, and be delivered in alignment with UL's Core Values.
- Suggest development activities that will support the Reviewee's ongoing performance in their current role and opportunities that will contribute to their career development, where appropriate.
- Ensure the Reviewee has clarity with regard to taking ownership of their own career development.
- Consider how any identified constraints can be overcome. Agree resource where necessary and available to facilitate delivery against objectives.
- Follow up on any matters raised in the PDR discussion as agreed.

- In cases where a pre-existing grievance or work-related dispute exists, proactively engage with the HR Business Partner to ensure this is managed sensitively and appropriately in the context of the PDRS conversation. Reviewers should not wait until the PDR Meeting to discuss any challenges that may arise for the Reviewee.

Reviewers have a responsibility to ensure that PDRs are completed within the timescales.

### **3.1.6 Expectations of HR**

The HR Talent Development unit will:

- Maintain the PDR policy and procedure on behalf of UL.
- Provide PDR training at regular intervals.
- Emphasise the importance of meaningful PDR meetings to support the ambitions of UL and its staff, in line with the University's goals and values.
- Emphasise the importance of employees taking ownership of their own career development.
- Report on PDR completion rates as required
- Discern training needs from PDR feedback to ensure it meets its commitment to developing suitable professional development supports for staff.
- Work with ITD to maintain the PDR system.
- HR Business Partners will support Reviewees and Reviewers as requested and appropriate.

## **4 Related Procedures for PDRS**

### **4.1 Timing of PDRs**

The PDR cycle is annual with dates as indicated on the website. A PDR meeting must take place annually and can take place any time within this cycle. However, the meeting and the PDR form needs to be completed by the end of the PDR year. The annual meeting takes place at a time agreed between the Reviewer and Reviewee. Completion reports will be shared with the Dean/Head of Division and data will be sent to Executive Committee for appropriate action.

### **4.2 Review of Previous 12 Months**

Together the Reviewee and the Reviewer review Individual and Team Objectives for the past 12 months (if applicable).

### **4.3 Setting Objectives and Development Plan for Next 12 Months**

The Reviewee will prepare the first draft of the PDR Document for the coming year and submit this to the Reviewer five working days in advance of the PDR meeting.

The reviewer will review in advance of the meeting and make notes of proposed suggestions for discussion at the meeting.

At the meeting, the Reviewer and Reviewee should agree new objectives for the year ahead. Development needs and opportunities that are necessary for the Reviewee to deliver their objectives will also be identified, in line with resources.

Guideline documents for conducting successful PDR meetings are available on the website.

#### **4.4 After the PDR Meeting**

Agreed PDR actions should be reviewed and followed up on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

#### **4.5 PDR System and Document Management**

The Reviewee and the Reviewer complete all fields as outlined in the PDRS form. Forms will be held on a system. Access to each form will be restricted as outlined in Section 3.1.3 above.

#### **4.6 Feedback and Coaching**

This should happen informally between the Reviewee and the Reviewer on an on-going basis.

## **5 Related Documents**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- i. Performance and Development Review System Form – Academic Staff
- ii. Researcher Development Review System Form – Postdoctoral Research Staff
- iii. Performance and Development Review System – All Other Staff
- iv. Performance Development Review System – Step by Step Guide
- v. Staff Development Policy
- vi. Guidelines for PDRs for Reviewers
- vii. Guidelines for PDRs for Reviewees
- viii. Probation Policy