This short guide covers the basics of having a productive appraisal conversation and then using the e-system to record it.

For fuller guidance on appraisal conversations (a step-by-step process, examples of objectives, an example of a completed record) see the Guidelines document on the HR appraisal web page (http://www.hr.qmul.ac.uk/procedures/appraisal/index.html).

For fuller guidance on using the system, again see the web page for a series of short video links.

1. The appraisal conversation

Research into what helps people to contribute well in organisations points to the quality of conversations between appraiser and appraisee as decisive. Going through the motions for the sake of ticking a box was found to be useless.

It is a conversation.

Usually the line manager is the appraiser, although where they have a large number of direct reports, they may delegate this responsibility.

It centres around three themes:

- Learning from the past
- Focus on the future
- Development for the present and the future

Top and tail

It is topped and tailed with a) preparation and b) making a record.

Part of a series

It is not isolated. It is a summary of a series of conversations from the previous year and the kick-off for a new series in the coming year.

For whose benefit?

It is for the benefit of both the individual appraisee and also Queen Mary. Whether discussing past or future work, a part of the focus should be on what the individual is contributing to the organisation (which may well be expressed more at departmental or team level rather than Queen Mary-wide), as well as pursuing their own development needs.

The sequence

Learning

Review the past year, both the objectives that were agreed and work that was done that was never captured as an objective. As you look together at the successes and the disappointments, the key question is: what can we learn?
primary reason for looking back at the past is to learn something for the future.

The conversation about future objectives is to give focus to the coming year. Agree objectives (between 4 and 8) that are specific and measurable and try to express the outcome as clearly as you can. These objectives will answer the question: “how can you contribute to Queen Mary/department/team’s strategy and plans?”

Alongside clarity goes the right level of ambitiousness for objectives: both under- and over-ambitious objectives are demoralising and can hinder rather than focus people.

When developing objectives, give attention to the priorities at a Queen Mary level and ask to what extent a particular appraisee might be able to contribute to these.

A current example and area of particular focus is student support, with Queen Mary recognising that increased student support and enhanced engagement between staff and student are potentially powerful levers in reducing our non-continuation rate. An appropriate objective in this area that would give an individual focus could be; “Completion of the necessary training for student support.” Objectives should complement the frameworks being developed to enhance student support such as the good practice guidelines and the establishment of an academic lead in each School/Institute.

The core conversation is around the question: “how will you develop to meet the needs of your current role as well as your ambitions for the future?”

2. The appraisal record

Record the conversation after the meeting rather than try to complete it during. Appraisees often use the system before the meet to draft and share future objectives as well as comments on their past year. This generally works well and, after the meeting, it remains for the appraisee to make adjustments based on the actual conversation.

The new system

The e-form for recording appraisals is, from May 2015, available to all non-probationary and non-clinical staff. The system has been designed to be as simple to use as possible. A step-by-step user guide is available on the HR web page.
Security

As with the paper version, each section (*Looking ahead* and *Looking back*) is itself in two parts. The first part, which you see immediately and which is where you record objectives and development plans, will be viewable to senior managers within your line structure. The second part, which sits behind a link at the end of the first part, is available if either party wishes to record confidential information. To maintain this confidentiality, the system treats the two parts differently so that only the appraisee and the appraiser/line manager have access to the confidential part.

Layout

The system mimics the paper version. Logging in, you enter your personal appraisal page under a tab headed *Me*. If you manage others, you will also see a separate tab, *My team* which will enable you to access your team’s individual appraisal records. Under the *Me* tab, you will see two further tabs, *Looking back* and *Looking ahead*. Once the transition is complete, the *Looking back* tab will display the objectives you agreed and recorded at last year’s appraisal and which you now want to write a comment on. The *Looking ahead* tab will be a blank version of the form where you will record the new objectives agreed for the coming year.

**Training needs.** Make sure that any training requirements are included in the *Training & Development* box and *Health & Safety Training* link to enable (anonymous) reporting for the purposes of CAPD and Health & Safety’s future planning.

Using the system

**Who does what?** The comments recorded should be agreed by both parties as fairly reflecting the appraisal conversation and so it doesn’t in reality matter who does the actual recording. However, it is usual for the appraisee to undertake the work, with the appraiser then reviewing for accuracy and adding their own comments where indicated.

**What happens next?** After the appraisee has written up the form – both *Looking back* and *Looking ahead* – and shared with their appraiser, they will both agree that the document is an accurate record of their conversation. At this point use the *Finalise* button. This will make two things happen.

1. It will lock the form and no further amendments will be possible. Do, therefore, ensure you are happy with the form before finalising. The form will still be available for review.

2. It will create a new form, titled *Appraisal 2016*. In this new form you will find that the new objectives you have agreed and recorded under the *Looking ahead* tab of the Appraisal 2015 form have been copied and reappear now under the *Looking back* tab of the Appraisal 2016 form. For the rest of the year, with your new objectives agreed, you will use this *Looking back* part until your next appraisal (in May 2016) in order to look back and amend, develop, update, delete the agreed objectives. At your next formal appraisal (in May 2016) you will also use this part to look back and comment on your achievements against those objectives.
Managing the transition for particular groups

**For central Professional Services**

The e-appraisal system was introduced to central Professional Services staff last year. If you are in central Professional services and did not access it then, you will need to take last year’s objectives ( wherever they are stored) and paste them into the *Looking back* section to enable you to then make use of the rest of the form for recording your comments on progress and what has been learnt. If you did access it, then the form will be ready for you to continue inputting.

**Staff without PC access**

Where staff in your area do not have ready access to a PC (most typically this is in parts of Estates), there is a simplified form available [here](#). Managers of these staff should have the appraisal conversation and it should be recorded on this simplified form. It is usually the appraisee who completes the form and they can either word-process or handwrite it. Where it is handwritten, the manager is asked to scan it and then attach it to the person’s appraisal page in the system (in the top right hand corner of the form you will find an attachment button). Additionally, managers should enter any specific training courses agreed in the *Training and Development Needs* box. This will enable CAPD, at the close of the appraisal season, to receive an anonymised download of all anticipated training for their own planning purposes.

**For the pilot group**

First a word of thanks. This group originally agreed to pilot the e-system in support of the new appraisal scheme a couple of years ago. The role of people in pilot groups is to iron out the wrinkles for those who come after, which means they bump into the wrinkles first and I’m aware there have been some glitches along the way in both the system function and our communication.

Please continue to use the system as before: the layout has changed very slightly from what you first encountered but most things will look familiar. Thank you. David Nida

**For H&SS and S&E Faculties**

Last year you will have agreed new objectives and recorded them on a Word version of the appraisal form, taken from the HR web page. A blank version of this form, under the tab *Looking back* will be available on the system. You have three options:

1. Continue to use the Word version of the form and, once complete, attach this to your appraisal page (using the *attach* button in the upper right corner).
2. Copy and paste the contents of last year’s Word form into the *Looking back* section so that you can then use the system for capturing your comments.

3. In the event you no longer have last year’s form or one was never created, but you still want to review the work completed last year, use the version on the system – in effect you will be retrospectively creating objectives, but doing so in order to be able to create helpful commentary on what has been learnt from the work of the year.

You will also, in your appraisal, agree new objectives for the coming year. Record these under the *Looking ahead* tab, along with development requirements.

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This appraisal process is application to non-clinical staff. Clinical Academics continue within the NHS/HIE Follett compliant joint appraisal/job planning and revalidation framework.

In the past, some parts of the School of Medicine and Dentistry separated appraisal in two parts, with different terminology for each: *performance review* was about a focus on work objectives, whilst the meeting called *appraisal* was focused on personal development. SMD’s performance standards indicate the two part are usually conducted contemporaneously, however.

The revised scheme adopts the term *appraisal* to cover both aspects, emphasising that people’s work is intrinsically linked with their development. These parts belong together: whether or not they are conducted as a single or two conversations. The present process treats the two as simply two sides of the same coin.

The scheme also assumes a scenario of one appraiser having a conversation with one appraisee. There are, however, some situations where this model needs flexing – dual reporting lines, having one formal line manager but having spent most of the year working for a different project manager. In these situations, having more than one appraiser may be suitable, as may ensuring that a single appraiser is well-informed and can reflect the views accurately of another manager. What is important is that the conversation – whoever it involves – feels consistent and coherent.

*Recording the appraisal.* The e-system has a standard, straightforward appraisal form available to all (non-clinical) staff. This will meet most needs. Some groups, however, may want to use a more detailed form, more precisely tailored to their individual needs and criteria applicable to their particular institute. In this situation, use the separate form and record on it what needs to go there. Then attach that form to the appraisal page (using the *attach* button in the upper right corner). If, for example, this form contains the person’s objectives, avoid duplication: it’s sufficient to record on the system form a brief note to *See attached.* The only exceptions are the box

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*For SMD Faculty*

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called Training and Development Needs and the link to Health & Safety Training. Ensure that training requirements are entered here: these boxes will be anonymised and reported to CAPD and Health & Safety to assist them with forward planning.

3. The appraisal process wheel