

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to address Development Dialogue (DD) for the 2019-2020 Performance Review process and the 2020-2021 Performance Contracting process under the COVID-19 lockdown period**

The guideline offers a high-level approach to managing the Development Dialogues (DD) during a period where in-person or face-to-face engagement is not possible due to the need for social and physical distancing.

- For issues related to the DD cycle please liaise with the Human Resource Practitioner for your department: [Human Resource Practitioners](#)
- FAQs related to more general issues about Development Dialogues are available at this link: <http://www.hr.uct.ac.za/hr/performance/management/pass/faq>

### **FAQs to assist in addressing DD matters at UCT during the lockdown period**

#### *1. Do we need to conduct DD performance reviews for 2019-2020?*

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has affirmed the need to continue to engage with staff in respect of performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will ensure that the culture of engagement around performance and development remains deeply embedded at the University. Staff members will have completed 10-months of their objectives prior to lockdown, while many will have continued working during lockdown and completed a full 12-month cycle up to May 2020.

Regular, ongoing feedback is important to maintain contact and connectivity with staff members and to engage around agreed deliverables. All staff members must be afforded the opportunity to complete the review of the 2019-2020 performance cycle.

#### *2. Why is it necessary to contract for performance for 2020-2021?*

Regular, ongoing feedback is important to maintain contact and connectivity with staff members and to engage around agreed deliverables. Many staff members will be working either fully or partially in COVID-19 lockdown Levels 3, 2 and 1 and must be afforded the opportunity to contract for this period.

Regular, ongoing assessment of agreed deliverables is where staff members and line managers can revisit deliverables as necessary in the light of shifting context and circumstances. Staff members unable to work during different lockdown levels (on a no-fault basis) can contract on deliverables that can commence once they return to work.

#### *3. How is this possible if we cannot physically meet for the discussion?*

Every effort must be made to engage with staff in respect of the DD process. Such an approach would rely on access to technology to access these platforms. DD engagements can be conducted remotely using the existing meeting platforms (MS Teams, Zoom, Skype etc).

Where a staff member is not able/comfortable with using technology to conduct remote engagements using an online meeting platform, or they do not have access to such a platform, staff members are to be engaged through telephonic conversations wherever possible. This method of engagement with staff will require formalisation via a text message from the line manager using SMS or WhatsApp to the staff member to record a summary of the final discussion.

4. *What if I have not been able to complete all my agreed deliverables in the 2019-2020 cycle?*

There may be some objectives which are not possible to be delivered under the current circumstances. Line managers are to take into consideration the current context and circumstances which are beyond the employees' control and to apply a fair and pragmatic approach to the DD review processes.

5. *What if a staff member hasn't been able to work since the lockdown?*

All staff members (unless newly employed) will have completed the performance cycle up until the date of lockdown (27 March 2020) Some work segmentation categories of staff have not been able to fulfil their full contractual obligations at the time of lockdown, whereas other categories of staff have continued to work fully or partially.

This means that all staff will have completed at least 10 months of the performance cycle, those who have been able to continue working will have completed a full 12-month performance cycle. Line managers are to take into consideration the current context and circumstances which are beyond the employees' control and to apply a fair and pragmatic approach to the DD review. This will require a performance review spanning 10 months, rather than 12 months.

Contracting for the 2020-2021 performance cycle can continue prior to staff members being able to return to work. The deliverables can then commence once the staff member resumes duty.

6. *What if I am unable to contact a staff member to hold the DD discussion?*

All staff **should be contactable and available unless they are on leave and** every effort must be made to engage the staff member for the DD process. In the few cases where staff members are not contactable then we acknowledge that the DD review and contracting process will need to be deferred to when the staff member returns to work. In these circumstances, line managers will need to keep a detailed record of their efforts to make contact with the staff member for inclusion as part of the DD process should this become necessary.

Not being able to make contact will mean that the staff member will have a delayed period to engage about performance and may not benefit from development opportunities that may have been possible over the delayed period.

7. *What if I don't want to use an online meeting platform or my personal telephone for the DD discussion?*

Line managers and staff members who are fully or partially able to fulfil their duties have an obligation to engage using one of the online meeting platforms or another form of agreed technology they would use in the normal course of their duties.

Where a staff member is not able/comfortable with using technology to conduct remote engagements using an online meeting platform, or they do not have access to such a platform, staff members are to be engaged through telephonic conversations wherever possible. This method of engagement with staff will require formalisation via a text message from the line manager using SMS or WhatsApp to the staff member to record a summary of the final discussion. No line manager should confirm a performance rating without having had an engagement with the staff member as outlined above.

8. *If my assessment period is deferred and my contracting period for 2020/2021 delayed, how does this impact my next assessment cycle?*

The contracting cycle is June to May. If your contracting period is deferred until you are able to return to work then your contracting period will be shortened. You will still contract until May 2021. You need to set objectives achievable within the shortened contracting period.

9. *What consideration should line managers be aware of when contracting for a reduced 2020/2021 cycle?*

Line managers are required to take a pragmatic approach to agreeing objectives with staff. This means considering the shortened contracting period and agreeing objectives with the staff member that are reasonable and achievable (the SMART objective setting principles are still relevant).

Given the shortened contracting period it is important that line managers plan these sessions with staff members without too much delay to support the staff member to understand the required deliverables.

10. *How will UCT as an organisation determine training priorities emanating from DD's as this may impact individual career progression?*

Career progression at UCT is an individual staff member responsibility. UCT offers a broad range of training programmes both classroom-based (under normal circumstances) and online using the SuccessFactors learning platform.

UCT looks at medium-term trends to determine training priorities and these do not shift significantly from year-to-year. Discussions about individual career aspirations span more than one DD cycle. The individual responsibility is then supported by the line manager and by broader policies across UCT (more information about development funding can be found at: <http://www.hr.uct.ac.za/hr/learning/funding/overview>). There are many online learning opportunities that can be accessed through the SuccessFactors platform.

The UCT Competency Framework is a useful tool to gauge the generic competencies required for different positions. One can reference these when preparing for the Development Dialogue. More information about the UCT Competency Framework can be found at this link:

[http://www.hr.uct.ac.za/hr/performance/management/pass/competency\\_framework](http://www.hr.uct.ac.za/hr/performance/management/pass/competency_framework)

11. *Will there be performance bonuses paid for this cycle?*

The Development Dialogue process is linked to pay-for-performance through Exceeds Awards catered for in the UCT Remuneration Policy. Discretionary bonuses are, by nature, *discretionary* and these bonuses are determined by the UCT Leadership as circumstances allow.

12. *When would I rate someone "unrated" as opposed to "meeting", given the Lockdown?*

The definition of a "meeting" rating is linked to the achievement of objectives as contracted between the staff member and line manager. The line manager is responsible for ensuring achievable objectives are set given the timeframe for the performance contracting. If the contracting period is deferred to later in the cycle then performance contracting is to be done in a pragmatic manner where agreed objectives are achievable.

"Unrated" ratings are applicable where a staff member has not had an opportunity to demonstrate competence in most functions of the job, usually where a staff member is new to UCT. If the staff

member has moved between jobs within UCT then the staff member must ensure that they have a performance review discussion with their line manager before moving from the previous role.

*13. If a staff member is currently on a PIP that has been put on hold, can they use the lockdown as an excuse if they are rated as "Not Meeting"?*

Where a staff member is continuing with fulfilling full or partial duties there is no reason to put a PIP on hold. Review discussions can be scheduled using the online meeting platforms or by telephone and followed up with a written summary.

The purpose of a PIP is to clarify expected performance requirements and to put corrective measures in place. It is the responsibility of both parties to ensure that corrective measures are achievable under the COVID-19 lockdown circumstances, or to adjust measures accordingly.

Where a staff member has been unable to return to work on a no-fault basis under the COVID-19 lockdown levels, the PIP review process will need to be adjusted, amending meeting dates to allow for competence to be measured. The staff member can continue to work on corrective measures, wherever possible, in preparation to return to the workplace to demonstrate their performance.

*14. Will the Terms of Reference for the Faculty/Departmental Development Forums change?*

The purpose of the Faculty /PASS Department Development Forums is to review consistency of ratings across all staff members in that area and to agree workforce planning and development.

Development Forums need to be aware of the accommodations made for different categories of work segmentation as far as these accommodations impact the performance review period and, potentially, how development plans are impacted by the potential deferring of the performance contracting process for some staff members.

Development Forums meetings will be finalised once all the Development Dialogues have been completed. The timing to conclude the process is dependent on the phased return to work for all staff.