

 <p>UCT Human Resources</p>	<p>Development Dialogue Approaches under COVID-19: Review Process for the 2019-2020 Cycle and Performance and Development Contracting Process for the 2020-2021 Cycle</p>
	<p>Purpose and Required Action: For engagement and discussion at the meeting with unions on 2 June 2020.</p>

1. Background

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.

In accordance with the above, Human Resources (HR) has prepared this document to guide and support the implementation of the Development Dialogue (DD) process for PASS staff. The proposed overarching direction is that all PASS staff should have an opportunity to complete the DD process of reviewing performance for the 2019 to 2020 cycle, and to contract objectives for the next performance cycle which runs from 2020 to 2021. Furthermore, the process of implementing and conducting DD's to give due regard to the key principles as articulated in this document.

It is important to recognise that a key difference in implementing the DD process during lockdown in comparison to what is the norm, is that the process usually includes in person/face-to-face interaction between line managers and staff. This will not be possible in the current context given the need to adhere to the social and physical distancing regulations, as set by Government. The recommendations take cognisance of and makes proposals in light of this.

The following key principles and objectives of performance management are to be noted in implementing the DD process

2. Approach and Key Principles

The UCT Development Dialogue (DD) system is used for performance contracting, management and development of professional, administrative & support services (PASS) staff in pay classes 2 to 12 and for senior staff in payclass 13.

The cycle runs over a 12 month period from June to May. In the context of the lockdown, which commenced in March 2020, some staff may not have an opportunity to complete the cycle of performance which ends in May 2020, in order to deliver on objectives set at the start of the cycle. These staff would essentially have completed 10-months of a 12-month DD cycle prior to the lockdown. This would apply to the work segmentation categories detailed as b) to d) below:

- a) Cohort able to work remotely fully;
- b) Cohort able to work remotely on a partial basis;
- c) Cohort performing essential services on a lean-model and rotational basis; and
- d) Cohort unable to work remotely.

In the above context the following key principles apply:

- An equitable approach across PASS and academic staffing categories - while a different system for performance contracting, review and development applies to the academic staff cohort, the recommended approach to continue during the lockdown period is applied to academics staff and is based on the same principles;
- Consistent and fair treatment of employees - it is important to ensure that all employees are treated in a consistent and fair manner in assessing their performance. This is especially so in

considering the implications of the different work segmentation categories where some staff are not able to fulfil obligations as previously contracted, on a no fault basis. It is important in this context to recalibrate the performance discussion in a manner to ensure that the 2 month period is not held against a staff member unfairly and that performance ratings are made taking cognisance of this and are made having balanced performance and circumstances on balance, in reviewing the full performance cycle; and

- Consistent and fair implementation of process - in a climate of instability and uncertainty the key principles of having *set clear objectives* and *providing developmental feedback* can assist UCT line managers to offer staff psychological safety, encourage motivation, and sustain productivity. This will ensure good risk mitigation of potential claims of inconsistent application and/or no feedback. Consistency and fairness will include rating staff appropriately where they have performed over and above expectations, have met expectations, as well where staff have performed below expectations. Once again, it will be key to consider circumstances beyond the employee's control to reach a fair and balanced decision so that the feedback and messaging of the rating outcome is evidence-based and fair.

3. Recommendations for implementing the DD cycle

3.1 *Work segmentation categories (a) and (b)* – Staff cohort able to work remotely fully and partially:

These categories of staff are able to work remotely and are therefore able to engage with their line managers during the lockdown period. In light of this, it is recommended that these categories continue with the DD cycle of reviewing performance and contracting objectives, as per norm, and via online platforms.

As indicated above, there may be some objectives which are not possible to be delivered under the current circumstances, particularly for the category (b) staff cohort. In accordance with the standard principles and guidelines of the DD process, line managers are to take into consideration, the current context and circumstances which are beyond the employees' control and to apply a pragmatic approach to the DD review and contracting processes.

DD engagements can be conducted remotely using the existing meeting platforms (MS Teams, Zoom etc). Such an approach would rely on the technology to administer the Development Dialogue process and access to these platforms.

3.2 *Work segmentation category (c)* - Cohort performing essential services on a lean-model and rotational basis:

This category of staff forms part of an essential service and are required to perform duties on campus during the lockdown period. This service is delivered in reduced form where duties are delivered as part of a shift or rotational work model. This means that there are times when staff are not called upon to deliver services as they would normally do. This would also include staff with comorbidities who have not been required to work on rotation to mitigate risk of exposure.

It is recommended that this category of staff continue with the DD cycle of reviewing performance and contracting of objectives as per norm by making use of technology where staff have access and are comfortable to do so. This will ensure that this category of staff is treated equitably, that there are no delays in implementing the process as applicable to them whilst complying with the regulations for social distancing.

Where the cohort 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 to avail themselves for telephonic conversations wherever possible. This method of engagement with staff will require formalisation via a text message from the line manager (SMS/WhatsApp) to the staff member, to record a summary of the final discussion.

Once again it is important to note that there may be some objectives which are not possible to be delivered under the current circumstances, particularly for this category of staff. In accordance with the standard principles and guidelines of the DD process, 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 and contracting processes.

3.3 Work segmentation category (d) Cohort unable to work remotely:

This category of staff would have been unable to perform their duties during the lockdown period on a no fault basis. Staff must be treated fairly in terms of rating performance outputs in a context where it was not possible to perform duties. Similar to staff in categories (b) and (c) above, this category of staff would have been able to deliver on 10 months of the full 12-month period of performance contracting.

Once again it is important to note that there may be some objectives which are not possible to be delivered under the current circumstances, particularly for this category of staff. In accordance with the standard principles and guidelines of the DD process, 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 and contracting processes.

The same methods of engagement including online platforms, email or telephone are proposed for this category of staff.

4. Key further considerations where it is not possible to engage staff about DD's:

Every effort must be made to engage with staff in respect of the DD process. Deans and Executive Directors have been engaged on the extent to which this will be possible or otherwise to ensure a consistent approach.

Notwithstanding this deliberate approach and concerted efforts, it may be, that given issues of access and levels of comfort with engaging differently, that it will not be possible to engage on performance with some staff.

Where this is the case, and noting that it is not ideal but may be a reality in a few cases, and that it may result in inconsistent treatment of staff, it is proposed that DD processes for these staff are deferred to a later stage when staff members return to work. This return date is still to be determined and will happen on a phased basis in accordance with the return to work plan being formulated by the COVID-19 Task Team.

The implications of this is that staff may have to wait for a prolonged period of time for feedback and may not benefit from development opportunities which are possible. Further implications also includes a potential disconnect between line managers and staff thereby also possibly impacting staff morale and levels of motivation.