



Dear colleagues,

I am writing to inform you of changes to the PDPR process and to invite your views on key aspects of a new appraisal process and how performance-related reward could operate at the University in future.

There is significant evidence from the Staff Engagement Survey that the PDPR process is not fit for purpose, and since arriving at Nottingham, I have heard consistent complaints about how it works. Although the complaints vary in specifics, they have come from all job families, all levels of staff and from both line managers and those who are managed.

Nottingham is an ambitious University, and we rightly have high expectations of performance and delivery from all of our staff. However, we also know that our University needs to do more to enable staff to thrive through supportive line management, rewarding high performance, and enhancing staff benefits.

The University has recently launched the Employee Hub which provides staff with an employee assistance programme and highlights an extensive range of benefits. However, the University's covenant with staff must extend to better recognising and rewarding staff for the work that they do.

There have been attempts to adjust the PDPR process in recent years. A common theme in these discussions is the difficulty of supporting staff development, recognition and reward through a single process. The 3-point scoring system is a blunt instrument that does not provide the nuance required to ensure the most effective performance management.

Over time, practices have detracted from what the PDPR process was intended to provide - a year-round conversation to support performance and achievement of objectives. All too often, we attempt to address staff objectives, performance, development, recognition and reward in a single meeting at the year-end.

Many colleagues will know that the University's PDPR steering and review groups have been working to develop a revised approach to PDPR with staff, managers and the trades unions. This revised approach - known as the Appraisal & Development Conversation (ADC) - will be in place for the next reporting year in May 2019.

Although the title of 'ADC' seems to suggest a single conversation, the intent is to encourage regular conversations between managers and staff across the year. The ADC will introduce new guidance and pro forma specific to each job family at the University, and will improve the process by which objectives are agreed. It will also remove performance ratings to encourage open and honest conversations that focus on progress towards objectives and staff development.

The University's PDPR steering and review groups will shortly begin developing a new approach to performance related reward that will be separate to the ADC, drawing from best practice across the higher education sector.



Further details of the changes are set out in the following letter from Jaspal Kaur, Director of Human Resources alongside invitations to staff focus groups to refine the proposals. I would invite colleagues to contribute your views on the new ADC pro forma and guidance as well as the performance related reward model as it develops.

I appreciate a big change like this will take commitment, but the prize is to find a way to fix a problem that you have identified and which has caused you both dissatisfaction and anxiety over a number of years. We have a real opportunity to take a fresh look at how we approach performance, development and reward, drawing on the experience from other high performing organisations both within and outside the higher education sector.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shearer West".

Professor Shearer West
President and Vice-Chancellor