

Please note that the intention is to update the existing SDPR process in order to make it simpler and more effective while also respecting the existing framework of the system. We intend to extend this updated approach to all academic staff but will consult and review repeatedly to make sure that we have the support of the community moving forward. Our suggestion is to use Career Conversations for postdoctoral researchers for the time being as this system may be more suited to assisting them in developing their progression plans. Similarly, colleagues on probation will undergo the corresponding process rather than the SDPR. It is fully intended that career progression and personal development be captured in the updated SDPR process.

We propose the following framework for the logistics of running SDPRs from June 2026

- a) Each department to identify SDPR consultants and allocate staff to each, with a maximum of 10 staff members assigned to each consultant. The consultants would typically be senior staff and line managers, with the HOD usually being expected to hold the SDPR conversation with the departmental consultants.
- b) A discussion session will be organised for the consultants to establish common ground in our approach.
- c) In the event of a staff member objecting to the assigned consultant (or vice versa, although one would hope that this would be rare) then reassignment is possible but would require there to be a good reason for such a reassignment. Valid reasons may include a conflict of interest based on a personal relationship or a clear greater suitability of another individual due to academic synergies. Decisions on reassignment will be taken by the HoD in consultation with the Dean.
- d) It is expected that this will be a long-term relationship and the expectation is that the same consultant will remain with the staff member for as long as practically possible so as to generate consistency and continuity.
- e) The SDPR form is to be submitted to the consultant no less than one week before the planned discussion. Typically, staff would submit data on publications, grant applications and teaching feedback as appropriate to inform the discussion. Responsibility for instigating the discussion lies with the consultant and both parties are expected to show reasonable flexibility in identifying a mutually satisfactory time. In the event of this diarising process becoming problematic the HoD shall be consulted. It is recommended that two hours be set aside for the discussion.
- f) The discussion may take place face to face or on Teams, although the former is strongly recommended. The discussions should take place between June and September of each year.
- g) The discussions should be conducted in a spirit of support, with the emphasis being on listening to the aspirations of the staff member and seeking to help them achieve their goals.
- h) The objective setting is at the heart of the SDPR process; the discussion will first look at how the previous year's objectives have been undertaken and will move on to setting objectives for the coming year. These should be realistic but stretching and in line with departmental/institutional priorities. While they will be primarily suggested by the consultant, they should be amicably agreed by both parties. The objectives should cover research, teaching, citizenship and outreach/external activities as appropriate to the duties of the staff member and will include discussion around current and aspirational workload balance of responsibilities the objective setting will be informed by the document outlining reasonable expectations for staff members.

- i) The consultant is encouraged to explore personal development, including promotion aspirations, with the staff member; the form has been designed to facilitate capture of these aspects of the discussion. Issues such as barriers to success, training requirements, circumstances that need to be taken into account and longer term career plans should typically all be touched on.
- j) It is envisaged that the vast majority of these discussions will be helpful and fully amicable as the intention is for SDPR to become an integral part of the career development of the staff member. In the event of there being a disagreement on objective attainment or setting, or there being concerns regarding staff member performance against agreed objectives, this will be brought to the attention of the HoD. It is not the role of the consultant to be a surrogate line manager to the staff member, so any disagreements are to be noted.
- k) The completed SDPR form is to be sent to the HoD for sign off. The HoD also has responsibility to note assistance that the staff member needs and, as far as is reasonably possible, to provide support to meet those needs. The HoD will bring any particularly pertinent issues to the attention of the Dean. A meeting will be held between the Dean and each HoD to discuss these cases, and requirements for successfully meeting objectives discussed as appropriate.
- l) The Dean will have the SDPR discussion with the HoDs. Associate Deans will have the discussion jointly with the HoD and the Dean, with the former leading the discussion.
- m) The staff member and consultant will typically agree a light touch, optional intervening discussion after six months. The intervening discussion will usually be more informal, with notes taken by the consultant and sent to the staff member for agreement and will cover reviewing progress against agreed objectives.