

## **Rewarding Exceptional Performance Guidance Notes for Managers / Panels / Employees**

### **1. Introduction**

Rewarding exceptional performance should be a positive experience for both the line managers involved and the employees for whom nominations are made. It is a time to celebrate and reward employees who have made a significant contribution to the workings of the University.

These guidance notes supplement the Rewarding Exceptional Performance Policy, and should be read in conjunction with the policy.

### **2. The difference between one-off and sustained exceptional performance**

An employee may do something on a one-off basis to an exceptional standard. This may or may not have been a normal requirement of their role.

Whereas sustained exceptional performance is more likely (although not exclusively) to involve carrying out a requirement of their role to an exceptional level over a long period of time.

Where a case for sustained exceptional performance is approved, the employee will be awarded one incremental point which is permanent. Therefore, maintaining that level of exceptional performance will continue to be rewarded and they should not be considered for further sustained exceptional performance awards unless there is a significant increase/step change in the level of their contribution.

Note – where an employee is expected to undertake duties/responsibilities at a higher grade, this should be considered through the re-grading procedure or through an acting-up allowance. Human Resources will advise if there is any doubt as to the appropriate procedure to use.

### **3. Making nominations**

Line managers have a responsibility to consider whether anyone in their team should be put forward for an award. It is not expected that any area will have many nominations as this scheme is designed to only reward exceptional performance. The number of appropriate nominations will vary from one area to another.

When determining whether a nomination should be made, line managers may find it helpful to look at the PSS 'Behaviours' as these describe the level of performance expected of all employees. Cases of exceptional performance should be exceeding these expectations.

Line managers should take the time to explain to employees why they have been put forward for an award and how their contribution is valued.

Most nominations will be made by line managers but individuals may also put themselves forward. In these circumstances it is expected that the individual will discuss their personal nomination with the line manager. The line manager must respect the right of the staff member to nominate

themselves. However, the line manager must be honest and should clearly state their reasons as to whether they agree or disagree that the nomination demonstrates exceptional performance on the form and discuss this with the individual prior to submission. The line manager should be positive and constructive in their feedback.

The nomination will still be considered even if the line manager does not agree that it constitutes exceptional performance.

Nominations should consist of:

- i. a detailed written case on the standard nomination form and be limited to no more than 2 sides of A4, which includes specific and detailed evidence of how the performance is considered to be exceptional. (see appendix 1 for examples)
- ii. a copy of the latest agreed job description. This helps provide context to the decision making panels and sets out the normal expectations in terms of duties/responsibilities of the role.
- iii. Supplementary documents may be included where they help to demonstrate the contribution made. For example:
  - Letters/e-mail of commendation from colleagues/customers
  - project summary reports
  - examples of internal/external communications/publicity

#### **4. How decisions are made**

Panels are able to request further information to assist in their decision making in order to obtain a clear picture and 'feel' for the contribution made. This acknowledges that not all nominations will be written to the same standard.

The decisions are subjective, the panel will be determining in their view, based on the evidence provided, whether the contribution is exceptional enough to merit an award and is truly more than the normal expectations of a jobholder in that particular role.

The panels (for academic-related and support staff) will use an assessment system similar to shortlisting in order to help them consider the merits of each case. This will also be useful in providing feedback to the employee.

#### **5. Feedback on successful and unsuccessful applications**

Line managers will provide feedback to the individual and should take the time to meet to discuss the outcome of nominations. The main objective must be to ensure that the employee feels appreciated whatever the outcome, by giving positive and constructive feedback.

If the nomination was successful, congratulate the employee and explain how much they will receive and when they can expect this.

If the nomination was unsuccessful, explain to employees the reasons why, based on the information provided by the panel. Line managers may seek further explanation if necessary before holding this conversation. Line managers should also explain the right of appeal - the grounds upon which an appeal can be made and how to do this.

An individual must have sufficient grounds in order to appeal. An appeal cannot be made simply because the individual disagrees with the decision. The grounds can only be that:

- a) they believe the process was not carried out in accordance with the policy
- b) they believe, based on the feedback, that part of their nomination was not considered

If a nomination is unsuccessful the line manager may wish to consider whether it is appropriate to consider recognising their contribution through the Staff Recognition Thank You Scheme.

## **Appendix 1.**

All nominations should include specific and detailed evidence of how the performance is considered to be exceptional. For example, it may explain what they did which resulted in:

- a significant impact upon the operational effectiveness/enhancement of the workings of the University(e.g.) efficiencies/improvements in working methods which result in budgetary savings, or enhanced services/student experience
- significantly exceeding agreed and realistic performance targets
- completion of a project(s) to exceptional standards
- responding to or managing significant and unpredictable events
- maintaining service standards in the face of significant operational/resourcing difficulties
- contributing to improvements/events of significant reputational importance to the University with far reaching implications
- gaining recognition within/external to the University, (e.g.) as an exemplar of best practice in a particular field/activity with far reaching benefits
- exceptional customer service (e.g.) going beyond normal expectations to assist colleagues/students/customers